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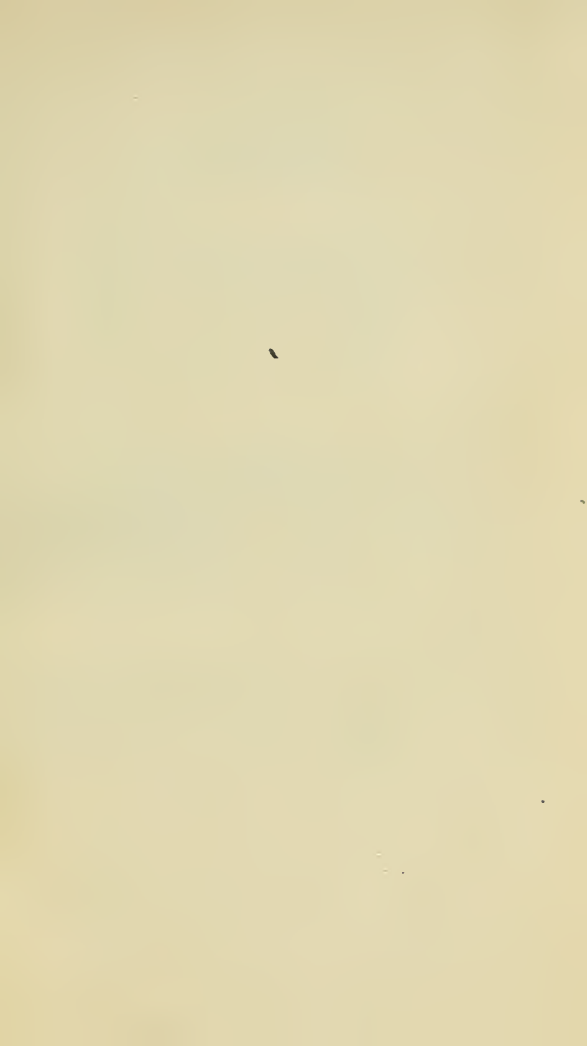
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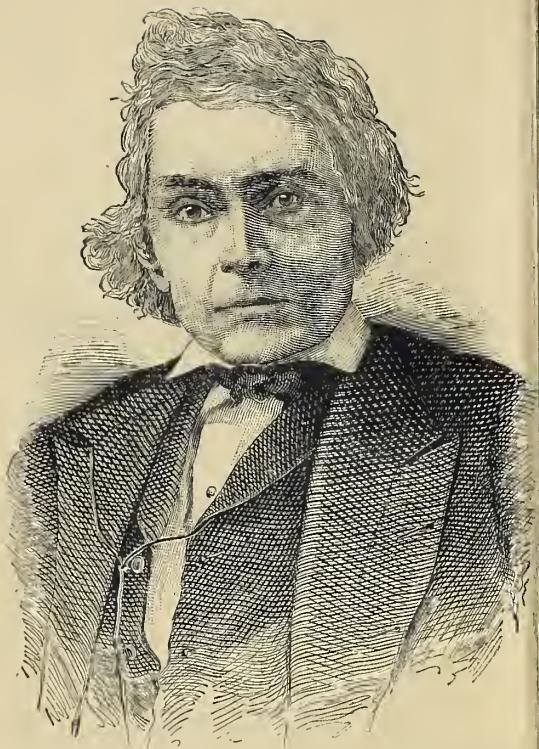
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ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS.

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THE LIFE  
OF  
ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS.

By FRANK H. NORTON.

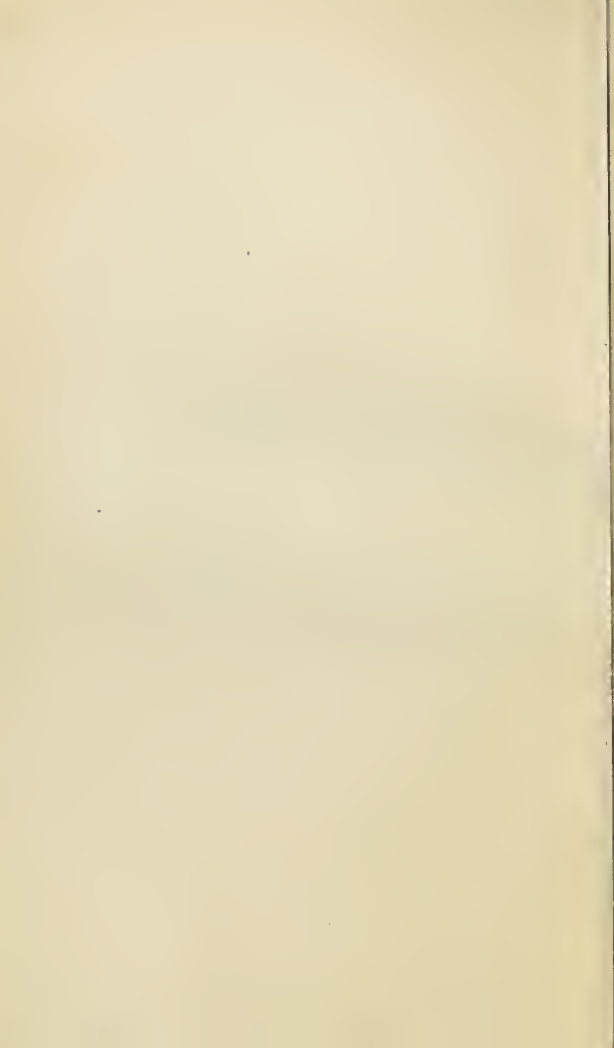
AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE OF MAJ. GEN. WINFIELD S. HANCOCK," ETC.



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NEW YORK:  
JOHN B. ALDEN, PUBLISHER,  
1883.





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of "promise," but of performance. An industrious habit, a spirit of perseverance seldom seen in one so young, and a rather ambitious turn of character—these elements had begun, dimly, but significantly, to suggest the nature of the boy who was to become the most distinguished personage in the State.

There would appear to have been a good deal of kindly feeling prevalent in the locality where Alexander Stephens had the good fortune to be born. In his instance it took the direction of a recognition of qualities above the average, and a generous determination to afford the possessor all the advantages which it was practicable to gain from them.

A perfectly unintended and innocent misunderstanding at this point, helped forward, curiously enough, the designs of the friends of young Stephens and his own necessities.

Probably on account of his constant weakness and frequent ill health, the boy's disposition had seemingly become, to a certain extent, morbid; a state, indeed, in which it remained at intervals all through his life. At this period, not unnaturally, he was somewhat despondent; and, as is frequently the case in sensitive children, this phase displayed itself for the time being, in a religious tendency. In the Sunday School which he attended, he became noticed for the seriousness of his demeanor, and his apparent sympathy with holy things. Attention being thus directed towards him, some gentlemen and ladies in the neighborhood interested themselves in his welfare, and intervened to procure him a better education than was open to him in the local school. An arrangement was accordingly made, (but only, and because of his own fixed determination as to that, on the understanding that the

expenses incurred were to be funded by the boy,) and he was sent to the Academy in Washington, Georgia, at that time a classical school in high repute. This academy was under the superintendence of Rev. Alexander Hamilton Webster, as to whom, and concerning his after-influence over his pupil, it is sufficient to say that the latter adopted the second name of Mr. Webster as his own, young Stephens having only been christened Alexander. Mr. Webster was, in fact, greatly pleased with the lad, and as he had in charge the Presbyterian church in Washington, he lost no time in inducting the lad into church membership. Indeed, the general design which at this time surrounded Stephens, and directed his life, would appear to have originated in what he termed a misunderstanding—the supposition that he could be induced to enter the ministry. It is certain that to this design the young man himself was not a party, and that he felt deep chagrin when he discovered, toward the close of his educational period, that it had existed. No one who considers the interest of the State of Georgia or of the country at large, can fail to recognize that such a determination as that of Alexander H. Stephens to the pulpit—while it would have certainly been a gain to the latter—would have been a state and nation's loss and grievance.

As illustrative of the rapidity with which the young man acquired knowledge, it may be observed that he completed his studies at Washington preparatory to entering college, in nine months, taking his place in the freshman class of the State University at Athens, known as Franklin College, in August, 1828. He graduated in 1832, borrowed enough money of his elder brother to discharge his indebtedness for

education, and at once sought a position as a teacher. He found little difficulty in obtaining what he desired in this direction, and both as a public teacher and as private tutor, displayed such marked abilities, and was so successful in training and educating the young, that he had no difficulty in earning a fair support. In the Spring of 1834, he began the study of law in Crawfordsville, where also he took a small position in the Sheriff's office. On the 22nd day of July of the same year, he was admitted to the Bar, being complimented on the examination for having presented a more than usually successful appearance. Refusing a good offer of a partnership in Columbus, Georgia, Mr. Stephens settled down to such law practice as he could obtain in Crawfordsville and vicinity, living "on six dollars a month, making his own fires, blacking his own boots, and earning four hundred dollars the first year."

The period immediately succeeding his admission to the Bar, or for the next few years, was, to the young lawyer, one of sore straits and great doubt as to the probabilities of success. He was poor, sickly, without influential backing, having, as it would appear, nothing in his favor, save a determination to persevere, and unbounded industry; that behind all this, awakening and invigilating these faculties, lay the great dominant force of native genius, was at this time as little appreciated as Alexander H. Stephens as it was by the townspeople and surrounding planters, who so often scoffed at his puny figure and laughed at his disproportionate ambition. This was the fact, however, and in trying his very first case of importance, Stephens displayed a combination of qualities which at once awakened the admiration of those who witnessed the exhibition.

The case was one which involved the possession and legal guardianship of a child, the rival claimants being the mother and the paternal grandfather. This situation gave Stephens his first opportunity for displaying his wonderful powers in addressing a jury, and his skill in turning circumstances and conditions to the advantage of his case. It is needless to say that he won the latter, having moreover produced the most profound impression ever known in that circuit in connection with so young a lawyer.

The Bar of the northern circuit of Georgia contained at this time a dozen men whose peers it would have been difficult to have found in any state in the Union. Robert Toombs, Francis H. Cone, Joseph H. Lumpkin, and William C. Dawson, had national reputations. With these men Stephens was brought into immediate rivalry, and within two years was considered the equal of any one of them. During this period he was fortunate also in having exceptionally good health, although in 1836 his weight was only ninety-six pounds, this being, however, more than he had ever weighed before.

In the year last named, Stephens was nominated for the lower house of the General Assembly of the State, and elected in spite of serious opposition. Although only twenty-four years of age, he had made himself obnoxious to a certain class of the community by his pronounced stand against certain favorite political and social dogmas. He was the open enemy of nullification; this doctrine was specially favored in that county, and it required no little courage to oppose it. Similar was the case with regard to the treatment of "abolitionists" who ventured into the district for the purpose of circulating incendiary documents among

the slaves. Several counties in Georgia had formed vigilance committees for the purpose of the arrest and summary punishment of these invaders, and a similar organization was now proposed for the county of Taliaferro. Against this proposition Stephens flung himself almost single-handed in the debates which occurred in regard to it, at the public meetings which were held for the purpose of indorsing and following the course of the other counties. Public feeling ran very high on this question, as would be supposed, and it required a vast amount of moral courage to face it; but Stephens placed himself firmly on the supremacy of the law, and from this position nothing could move him. In the course of the debates, he signally manifested the powers which, later on in life, were to become of such grave importance in a broader field and larger arena. Persuasion and stern injunction, by turns, sustained by an extraordinary accumulation of legal lore and illustration—extraordinary for one so young and inexperienced—the adroit use of these weapons resulted in the success of the brilliant young orator; the resolutions in favor of the vigilance committee were defeated by a large majority. The result of this incident, as we have signified, was to awaken a widespread spirit of opposition, when Mr. Stephens appeared before the county as a candidate for the Assembly. Despite this, however, and though he was seized just at the time of the election with a serious attack of illness, he defeated his antagonist by nearly two to one.

During the first session which he attended at Milledgeville, the state capitol, Stephens was sick most of the time, but even under such adverse circumstances, and in a body of men distinguished for ability, succeeded in gaining for himself a high reputation both for



his forensic ability and for his good judgment and general accuracy. The style of Mr. Stephens' oratory may be best indicated by the following quotation from a letter written by him during this, his first legislative experience.

“I have, since I came here, come to the conclusion that words are—if you please—moral instruments capable of effecting much, when properly applied and directed. And it is altogether useless, at any and all times to talk, without having in view some object to effect. In legislating in *Georgia*, it is waste of breath for a man to talk about Greece and Rome, Scipio and Hannibal, Tyre and Carthage, or any of that learned sort of lore. If one indulges much in it, he is soon looked upon as a fool, speaking in an ‘unknown tongue,’ and very properly so too. Eloquence, *true* eloquence, is certainly in some degree an art; but in nothing more than in selecting and fitting the matter to the time, place, and circumstances. The whole generation of our young orators, instead of reading Blair for rules, Scott and Addison for figures, and Byron and Shakespeare for quotations, had better be studying their subject, and thinking to whom they are going to present it, and how they will most probably engage attention, and produce conviction in the minds of those to whom it is presented. Success in producing conviction is the object of oratory.”



## CHAPTER II.

### ELECTION TO CONGRESS—CONDITION OF POLITICS— THE “GEORGIA PLATFORM”—SPEECH ON THE MEXICAN TREATY QUESTION.

MR. STEPHENS was re-elected to the assembly continuously until 1841, when he positively declined re-election, the persistency with which ill-health had followed him having rendered it necessary that he should take a period of rest. In 1842, however, he was elected to the State Senate, which he left in the following year to enter Congress.

By this time Mr. Stephens was considered one of the ablest lawyers in the state. He was also not unknown through the nation, having made a sea voyage as far as Boston, and also traveled over-land, visiting Saratoga Springs, New York, Baltimore and Washington, and making the acquaintance of public men wherever he found himself.

Politics throughout the country was nearing the transition period. In the interval between the downfall of the old Whig party and the birth of the Republican party, there was to be a general divergence of party lines, and a shaking up of party affiliations.

Entering Congress as a Whig, Mr. Stephens continued to vote and work with that party until the period of its dissolution, at which time his opinions tending towards opposition to the strengthening abolition tendency of the North, he became identified with the "resistance party," as it was called, which, in the South was the inception of the pro-slavery and state rights Democracy of the future.

Even to Washington City, Alexander H. Stephens' customary misfortune as regarded health, followed him with unfailing pertinacity. Immediately upon his arrival, after his election to Congress, he was stricken down, and was near dying. On entering, his right to his seat became the subject of contest, on account of an electoral question existing between Congress and the States, but he gained his cause. Mr. Stephens voted for Harrison in 1840, and for Clay, in opposition to Mr. Polk, in 1844. He favored the acquisition of Texas, but opposed the Mexican War, on constitutional principles. The admission of California into the Union in 1850, awakened a secession movement in the South, to which Mr. Stephens was opposed. During the Autumn of that year, he traveled through his state, making speeches in every part of it, in behalf of the Union under the Constitution. The "Georgia Platform," of 1850, becomes at this date an interesting document, signifying as it did, the awakened sensitiveness of the South on the subject of slavery. This platform contained five sections. The first set forth that the American Union was "secondary in importance only to the rights and principles it was designed to perpetuate." Second, that if the thirteen original parties to the compact found compromise necessary, the thirty-one in existence in 1850 might yield somewhat to preserve the integrity of the Union.

Third, that the State of Georgia, while not approving, consented to abide by the action of Congress in regard to the admission of California; the suppression of the slave trade in the District of Columbia; the extradition of fugitive slaves, etc. Fourth, that the State of Georgia would and ought to resist, even to the point of severing its connection with the Union, "any future Act of Congress abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, without the consent and petition of the slave holders thereof, or any Act abolishing slavery in places within the slaveholding states purchased by the United States for the erection of forts, magazines, arsenals, dock-yards, navy-yards, and other like purposes, or in any act suppressing the slave trade between slaveholding states, or in any refusal to admit as a state any territory applying, because of the existence of slavery therein, or in any act prohibiting the introduction of slaves into the territories of Utah and New Mexico, or in any act repealing or materially modifying the laws now in force for the recovery of fugitive slaves." Fifth, "that it is the deliberate opinion of this Convention that, upon the faithful execution of the fugitive slave bill by the proper authorities depends the preservation of our much loved Union." Ten years later, in a speech which he made in Atlanta, Georgia, Hon. Stephen A. Douglas said of these five propositions that "each of them was just and right of itself. I stand by each of them to-day. I have stood by them from the time I entered public life down to this hour. . . . I am told that some of those opposed to me are in the habit of saying that I construe the Georgia Platform differently from what they do. I never construed it at all. It is so plain that it does not admit of any two constructions. It con-

strucs itself; but if there is any doubt, any possible ambiguity upon that point, I will take Georgia's own construction of it. The Georgia Platform was predicated upon the principles incorporated in the compromise measures of 1850."

It has been deemed desirable to quote to this extent from the current political history of the period in question, with the view of indicating the nativity and growth of the opinions which from that time forward dictated the important acts of Alexander H. Stephens. Upon the foundation afforded by the Platform whose propositions we have enumerated was based the constitutional Union party. It is a remarkable fact in the political history of this country, that this party would have supported Daniel Webster, had that immortal statesman not closed his earthly career just before the election. It is stated as a fact that many persons in Georgia, and including Robert Toombs and Alexander H. Stephens, showed their respect for the great Expounder of the Constitution by voting for him after he was dead.

To recapitulate: In 1840 Mr. Stephens, as a state rights man, supported Harrison, in 1844 he supported Mr. Clay; in 1845 he was united with the Democratic party on the admission of Texas; but in 1846 and 1847 he was with Mr. Calhoun and the Whig party on the Mexican war. In pursuance of this policy, Mr. Stephens supported General Taylor for election in 1848, and his administration until 1850, when he disapproved of it. In 1854, he defended the principles of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which was claimed by him and by Judge Douglas to conform exactly to the principles affirmed by the compromise measures of 1850.

The careful reader will have observed the exact consistency with which Mr. Stephens' political conclusions had agreed with himself—despite their not infrequent disagreement with party tenets; in fact, Alexander H. Stephens was in no sense a partisan. Throughout his life, he subordinated party fealty to principle, holding abstract justice highest in his esteem, and after that the good and policy of his country. Meanwhile, he did not permit his relations with men to be disturbed, or his regard for them to be alienated on account of political differences. Whenever any such incident occurred it was occasioned either by the parties themselves, or through the instrumentality of injudicious friends. While he refused to support General Scott for the Presidency in 1852, this was on account of the general's failure to endorse the principles of the compromise measures of 1850. So far was Mr. Stephens from not appreciating the general's military worth and his great public services, that it was mainly through his personal effort that the chieftain had conferred upon him the rank of Lieutenant General. Mr. Stephens' political life for this time concluded with the election of Mr. Buchanan, whom he had opposed. The quarrel between the latter and Judge Douglas he viewed with great disapproval, considering it not only unwise and impolitic, but unjust. Foreseeing the disruption of the Democratic party at the Charleston Convention, he retired to private life, fitly characterizing his own action by one of his quaint and original expressions:—"When I see the engineer is reckless, and expect a smash-up ahead, I always get off at the first station."

As still further illustrating the peculiar nature of Mr. Stephens' mind, the firmness of his convictions, the fixedness of his purpose, and his remarkable prescience

in the consideration of affairs, we may quote from a speech made by him on the 12th of February, 1847, in the House of Representatives, on the question of the appropriation of three millions of dollars to enable the President to conclude a treaty with Mexico, he said:

“Mr. Chairman: It is useless to attempt to disguise the fact or to affect to be blind to the truth that this country is now surrounded by difficulties of no ordinary magnitude, and fast approaching others which threaten to be far greater and more perilous than any which have ever been encountered since the foundation of the government.

“It is true, the declaration was made the other day by a distinguished Senator in his place, that he saw no dangers about, he espied nothing in the prospect to cause alarm or apprehension, and that in his opinion, ‘the sentinel upon his watch-tower might sing upon his post.’ Sir, whether this sentiment was expressed by authority, and is to be taken as the exponent of the feelings of those who are now wielding so recklessly the destinies of the nation, I know not; but to me it seems somewhat kindred to, if not the legitimate offspring of that spirit which prompted Nero to indulge in music and dancing when Rome was in flames.”

After denouncing the attempt of the administration to prevent free speech concerning its acts, Mr. Stephens went on to speak of the unfair means used in the election of Mr. Polk:

“But if, in the inscrutable ways of Providence, he who has been thus fraudulently elevated to power should be the ill-fated instrument of our chastisement, the punishment may be just, but he will take no honor

in its execution. If the result of his mischievous counsels should in any way prove disastrous to our institutions—the stability, harmony and permanency of the Government—which there is now abundant cause seriously to apprehend, he will certainly have no place in the grateful remembrance of mankind. Fame he will have; but it will be of the character of that which perpetuates the name of Frostratus. And the more deeply blackened than even his, as the stately structure of this government, the temple of our liberties, is grander and more majestic than the far-famed magnificence of the Ephesian dome.”

“The crisis, sir, requires not only firmness of principle, but boldness of speech. As the immortal Tully said, in the days of Cataline, when Rome was threatened with the most imminent dangers, the time has come when the opinion of men should not be uttered by their voices only, but *‘inscriptum sit in fronte unius cujusque quid de respublica sentit’*—it should even be written upon the forehead of each one what he thinks of the republic—there should be no concealment. In what have to say, therefore, I shall use that character of speech which I think befitting the time and occasion.”

Speaking of the Wilmot proviso and the resolution of the Legislatures of the States of New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, he said:

“They show a fixed determination, on the part of the North, which is in a majority in this House, and ever will be hereafter, that if territory is acquired the institutions of the South shall be forever excluded from its limits. This is to be the condition attached to the bill upon your table! What is to be the result of this matter? Will the South submit to this restriction?



Will the North ultimately yield, or shall these two great sections of the Union be arrayed against each other? When the elements of discord are fully aroused, who shall direct the storm? Who does not know how this country was shaken to its very centre by the Missouri agitation?

“Should another such a scene occur, who shall be mighty enough to prevent the most disastrous consequences? The master spirit of that day is no longer in your councils. Shall another equally great and patriotic ever be found? Let not gentlemen quiet their apprehensions by staving off this question. It has to be met, and better now than at a future day. It had better be decided now than after more blood and treasure have been spent in the pursuit of that which may ultimately be our ruin.

“Upon the subject of slavery, about which so much has been said in this debate, I shall say but little. I do not think it necessary to enter into a defence of the character of the people of my section of the Union against the arguments of those who have been pleased to denounce that institution as wicked and sinful. It is sufficient for me and for them that the morality of that institution stands upon a basis as firm as the Bible; and by that code of morals we are content to abide until a better be furnished. Until Christianity be overthrown, and some other system of ethics be substituted, the relation of master and slave can never be regarded as an offence against the divine laws. The character of our people speaks for itself, and a more generous, more liberal, more charitable, more benevolent, more philanthropic, and a more magnanimous people, I venture to say, are not to be found in any part of this or any other country. As to their piety, it is true, they have



'none to boast of,' but they are free from that pharisaical sin of self-righteousness, which is so often displayed elsewhere, of forever thanking the Lord that they are not as other men are. . . But if bad counsels prevail, if all the solemn admonitions of the present and the past are disregarded—if the policy of the administration is to be carried out—if Mexico, 'the forbidden fruit,' is to be seized at every hazard, I very much fear that those who control public affairs, in their eager pursuit after the unenviable distinction of despoiling a neighboring republic, will have the still less enviable glory of coming back upon the shattered and broken ruins of their own confederacy. And instead of the *halls of Montezuma*, of gloating over the ruins of ancient cities of the Aztecs, they may turn and behold in their rear another scene of desolation, carnage and blood.

"Mr. Chairman, it was asked by some gentleman never spake, 'What shall a man gain the whole world and lose his soul?' may I not, with reverence, ask whether we have not profited as a nation if we gain any part of the whole of Mexico, and lose the Union, the soul of our political existence? The Union is not only the life but the soul of these states. It is this that gives them animation, vigor, power, prosperity, greatness and renown; and from this alone springs our hopes of immortality as a common people."

This was, in many respects, a very remarkable speech. Stephens was, at this time, thirty-five years old, and the promise of his youth for ill health had, if anything, been exceeded by the performance of his more mature years. At no moment was he well;

usually his state was one of extreme feebleness and debility, changing occasionally to fits of alarming and serious illness. Such a condition must necessarily have preyed on his mind, and made efforts which to men in sound bodily condition, would have been comparatively easy, to be with him, matters of extreme difficulty and struggle. It might have been expected that such a state would have aroused in him a degree of nervous irritability, which, in the excited condition of the times would have kept him embroiled in party and faction; instead of which, his judgment remained clear, he has never been biased, his sense of justice unimpaired, his moral vision obscured; the consequence was serene and unperturbed, and he refused to enter into any contest, no matter how important the plane higher than most of his contemporaries, and more certain approximation to truth than they. In this speech we see a man of deep passion, yet eloquent. His intellectual sword, through the past and future, and recognizes possible consequences of present action, which not even the wisest, or other men of his time, could venture to predict. We have here his opinion with regard to slavery, concerning the nature and value of the Union, and in relation to the important subjects of the acquisition of territory through the processes of war and conquest. As to each of these grave and important subjects, we see him rising to their own dignity and looking down upon the petty and selfish judgments of local politicians, in a spirit of grave displeasure and solemn warning. Viewed in this wise, this remarkable speech may be taken as, in very much, an index to the character of Alexander H. Stephens.

## CHAPTER III.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND STYLE OF ORATORY  
—“KNOW-NOTHINGISM” IN GEORGIA—OPINION OF  
MR. STEPHENS BY A GEORGIA HISTORIAN—THE  
ASSAULT ON HIM BY JUDGE CONE—HE IS AT-  
TACKED WHILE UNARMED, AND NEARLY CUT TO  
PIECES.

As we have said, the great Georgian retired from public life in 1859, uncertain, doubtless, himself, as to how long that retirement might last. A writer at this time describing the prominent scenes and personages of Washington, alluded thus to the subject of our sketch.

“Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, one of the oldest members of the House of Representatives, is the most prominent man intellectually, and the most remarkable man physically, of the few remaining celebrities. From his infancy he has been an invalid, and the fearful effect of suffering is shown in his singularly delicate frame, in his pale, attenuated face, and in his feeble walk. A first introduction to Mr. Stephens fairly startles you, and it is utterly impossible to realize that there stands before you a man deservedly famous for his triumphs alike at the bar and the forum; that one so frail could,

by his mental ability, give character to the legislation of a great people; but a few moments' conversation, however, only, are necessary to impress you with the feeling that you are in the presence of a remarkable man. There is the simplicity of a child in his manner, yet his rich and varied experience crowds upon you in anecdote and incident, in the statement of broad principles and philosophic reflections, and carries you away with the gentleness and the power of a deep and irresistible stream. His reminiscences of great men are charming beyond expression, and he seems particularly fond of dwelling upon the mental characteristics of such men as Crawford, Clay, Webster and their compeers, analyzing with singular perception their peculiarities, and by happy flashes of illustration giving you a key to their characters—crystallizing them, indeed, until you could see through and through them and understand them as if you had a new sense of mental perception. . . . When Mr. Stephens rises to speak, there is a sort of electric communication among the audience, as if something was about to be uttered that was worth listening to. The loungers take their seats, and the talkers become silent, thus paying an involuntary compliment to Mr. Stephens' talents and high claims as a gentleman. At first his voice is scarcely distinguishable; but in a few moments you are surprised at its volume, and you are soon convinced that his lungs are in perfect order; and as his ideas flow, you are not surprised at the rapt attention he commands. His style of speaking is singularly polished; but he conceals his art, and appears, to the superficial observer, to be eloquent by inspiration. The leading characteristic of his mind is great practical good sense, for his arguments are always of the most solid and

logical kind; hence his permanent influence as a statesman, while his bright scintillation of wit and profuse adornment secure him a constant popularity as an orator. Possessed of a mind too great to be restrained by mere partisan influence, he has therefore the widest possible field of action—at one time heading a forlorn hope, and leading it to victory; at another giving grace and character to a triumphant majority. Common as it is to impugn the motives of many of our public servants, and charge them directly with corruption, Mr. Stephens has escaped without even the taint of suspicion; an inflexible honesty of purpose on his part, as a governing principle, is awarded to him by his veriest political foe.”

An important period in Mr. Stephens’ political life, was one to which we have hitherto only indirectly alluded, but as to which something more definite should be said. This was the period of “Know-nothingism,” concerning which, in its relation to the State of Georgia, Col. I. W. Avery writes as follows:

“Crushed in the national contest, and hopelessly riven in the Southern States, the Whig party found a temporary refuge in this new-fangled American party. It had a large following in Georgia for a while, and a respectable one too. It was bitterly fought. Ex-Gov. McDonald, Howell Cobb, Alex. H. Stephens, Robert Toombs, and Hiram Warner wrote strong letters against it, while Mr. Stephens made some of the ablest speeches of his career on this subject. The term of Mr. Stephens in Congress was out. He was uncertain of running again. He wrote a letter against “Know-nothingism,” in response for a request for his views. He was vigorously assailed and declared to have made his political

shroud, when with that defiant audacity that has marked his life, he announced his candidacy, and proceeded to test the issue of his "political shroud." His speeches were masterpieces, and he converted the shroud into a wreath of political laurels, returning to Congress by a majority of over two thousand."

It was characteristic of the conservatism of Mr. Stephens' nature, that he should have opposed the doctrines of "Know-nothingism," a leading element in which was the proscription of the foreign-born portion of the population on that ground alone, and without regard to other points of qualification. Inasmuch as we have quoted from Colonel Avery, the brilliant author of the "History of the State of Georgia, from 1850 to 1881," we will give here this gentleman's summary of his opinion of Mr. Stephens, an opinion which, at the time it was written—1880—had become that of the better class of mind, not in Georgia alone, but in the whole South, and in the North as well, wherever the character of the man was understood. Col. Avery wrote of him as follows:

"Another vital personality was that remarkable man, Alexander H. Stephens. He, too, was a Union man. It is hard to write about Alec Stephens. He has been all his life a human miracle. His advent into public life, nearly half a century ago, was, and his career ever since has continued to be, a wonder. Antithesis has been exhausted in describing the man, and yet there is no adequate portraiture of him. For forty years and more, Mr. Stephens has held a foremost place in the affairs of the State and Nation, and his name and speeches, overleaping the bounds of the continent, reached the old world, rendering him famous, and illus-

trating Georgia. His purity of life, public spirit, stainless integrity, devotion to principle, love of truth, simplicity of character, munificent charity, lofty patriotism, independence of popular prejudice, sincerity of conviction, indomitable courage, magnetic eloquence and vigorous statesmanship, have all been continuously displayed in his long, useful and brilliant public career, and form a noble example for the imitation of our ambitious young men.

“That a mind so powerful and a spirit so knightly should inhabit a body so diseased and frail, has been the miracle of his conspicuous life. At any time during his laborious and honored existence, his death could not have surprised; yet his physical frailty never impaired his public usefulness. Nearly seventy years of age, he is still at his post of duty, filling in his own unequalled way the place in which he has won his proudest triumphs and most lasting fame—a congressman from Georgia, a representative of the people and chosen by the people—Georgia's great Commoner, the people that he has loved so well and the state that he has so faithfully served and resplendently illustrated, delight to honor him, and hold his solid fame as one of her most precious heritages.

“Mr. Stephens, too, was one of the strong Union men, and to the very last his potential voice was heard eloquently protesting and unanswerably arguing against secession. Mr. Stephens has been a statesman and an orator, but the quality that more than all others has tended to give him his vast public influence, has been his wonderful moral intrepidity. It is a rare quality, heaven-born and God-like—such moral courage as he has shown all his life long. No adverse public opinion has had any terrors for this fearless statesman. Majorities



have been utterly powerless to sway him. No unpopularity, no prejudice, no popular frenzy has ever moved his firm soul one hair's-breadth from any conviction, or prevented any utterance he deemed the truth. This is remarkable praise, but it is due to the man. But even the miraculous Stephens was unable to stem the revolution. The storm was coming, and Toombs was its genius."

This is indeed "remarkable praise," the more remarkable from being at the hands of a prominent Confederate cavalry officer, who illustrates in his characterization of Mr. Stephens, the general sense of justice which usually prevailed among the more intelligent Southern men, and also the profound impression which had been made by Mr. Stephens' extraordinary moral and mental endowments.

And here, although the date of its occurrence was long before the period we have reached, 1860, we may relate a story illustrating the physical courage of Mr. Stephens, that of his rencontre with Judge Cone, which took place in 1848; we quote the report of this occurrence from a description of it given by a correspondent of the Cincinnati *Commercial*:

"During Mr. Stephens' congressional service, and pending the campaign of 1848, he returned from Washington to Georgia. He was fresh from the great debates on the acquisition of California and New Mexico as United States territories, and for having taken, against the wishes of a majority of the Southern members, a most prominent part in opposition to such acquisition, he was met with much adverse criticism. Judge Cone, who was at the time one of the leading politicians of Georgia, was particularly severe in his comments on



Mr. Stephens' action, and was reported as having publicly denounced him as a traitor to the South.

"Hardly had Mr. Stephens reached his home when these and similar reports were conveyed to him. At first he did not credit them, but as one kind friend after another informed him that Cone had called him a traitor, and advised, in the true Southern spirit, that he owed it to himself to demand what is called 'satisfaction,' the fires of pugnacity in his nature, which are always smouldering, hissed up, and he declared that if Judge Cone would admit having called him a traitor to the South he would 'slap his face.' Not long after this he met the Judge at a numerously attended Whig gathering, and going up to him quietly said:

"'Judge Cone, I have been told that you, for reasons of your own, have denounced me as a traitor to the South, and I take this opportunity of asking you if such reports are true.'

"'No, sir,' was Cone's reply, 'they are not true.'

"'I am very glad to hear you say so,' said Mr. Stephens, cordially; and in the same friendly tone continued: 'Of course I do not desire to be in any way offensive to you, Judge Cone, but in order that we may have no further misunderstanding through the misrepresentation of others, I think it right to tell you that I have said I would slap your face if you admitted having used the language attributed to you.'

"Upon this the judge again disowned having spoken disrespectfully of Mr. Stephens, and so for the time the affair ended. It was the subject of discussion all over the State, however, and the general verdict was that Judge Cone, a very powerful man by the way, had shown the white feather to 'Little Aleck Stephens.' In such a community no public man resting under such

a charge could hope either for political preferment or popular respect. Cone, of course, knew this, and, very much heated and annoyed by the comments which were being made upon him, wrote to Mr. Stephens demanding immediate and public retraction of the threat. In reply Mr. Stephens wrote that the threat of slapping the judge's face had been made contingent upon the truth of reports regarding which he (Mr. Cone) had pronounced to be untrue, and that such being the case there could be no cause for offence or angry feeling on either side. Unfortunately this letter was never received by Judge Cone. Three or four days after it was written, however, he met Mr. Stephens on the piazza of a hotel in Atlanta, and, disregarding that gentleman's friendly greeting, said in a very offensive tone:

“ ‘Mr. Stephens, I demand that you make an immediate retraction of your threats regarding me.’ ”

“ ‘Sick and weak though he was, Alexander H. Stephens could allow no one to speak to him in the fashion described. Judge Cone was a very giant in size and muscular development, yet the frail man whom he addressed, with aggravating politeness, and without hesitating a moment, replied: ‘Pardon me, sir, I have already written to you on that subject. I must decline to discuss it further.’ ”

“ ‘Am I to take this for your answer?’ asked Cone, excitedly.

“ ‘It is the only answer I have to give you,’ was the calm reply.

“ ‘Then I denounce you as a miserable little traitor,’ cried Cone, mad with excitement. The last words had hardly left his lips when a light cane, wielded by the

quick hand of the man he had insulted, left its red scar across his cheek.

“Wild with pain and passion, without uttering a word, he drew a keen-pointed dirk knife and made one furious thrust at his weak little adversary’s heart. Instantly as he did so, however, Stephens, seizing a stout umbrella which he held in his left hand, interposed it as a defence, and was able for a moment to hold him at arm’s length. The knife fell short of its mark. Once more it was thrust at Stephens, cutting a deep gash in his arm, but reaching no vital point; eighteen times it cut deep into his breast, arms and body, but still he did not fall. Then he could hold out no longer. No courage, no spirit, however firm and unyielding, could long withstand such an attack. Cone was determined to finish his work. He threw all his great weight against the umbrella which held him away from the man he intended to kill. It broke; Stephens, half fainting, fell upon his back. The giant Cone was at his throat in a moment; his head, by a grip of iron, was held against the cruel floor; the keen and blood-dripping knife was held aloft before him ready for the last fatal thrust, but still the poor, pale face of the little hero was set and defiant—his black eyes still flashed undauntedly.

“‘Retract, or I’ll cut your cursed throat!’ hissed Cone.

“‘Cut! I’ll never retract!’ gasped the almost lifeless Stephens.”

Like a flash the knife came down. With an almost superhuman effort the prostrate man caught it in his right hand. Clean through the muscles, tendons and bones of the hand it cut, then stuck fast and reached no

vital part. With desperate strength Cone tried to wrench it free. With a grasp almost of death the horribly mangled and mutilated hand still held it fast. In the struggle Stephens was once more dragged to his feet. The blood was rushing in streams from his many wounds. His hold upon the knife which sought his brave heart began to relax. He was dying. But even when he believed the next moment would be his last strong men came to his relief. The madman Cone was secured and held fast.

“Then quickly the wounds which Mr. Stephens had received were examined. It was found that one of them had penetrated to within a sixteenth of an inch of his heart. An intercostal artery had been cut. The doctors declared that he would surely die. Happily their predictions were not verified. His life was saved by the unremitting care of a surgeon, his devoted friend, who, as good fortune would have it, happened to be in Atlanta at the time. When he recovered with magnanimity of which few men are capable even of understanding, he refused to prosecute Cone, and that person, instead of getting his deserts in the dark cell of a state prison, was fined \$1 000, and, with his honor ‘vindicated,’ was allowed to go free. To the day of his death Mr. Stephens spoke of him in terms of consideration and forgiveness. Not long ago, referring to the terrible struggle I have attempted to describe, and showing me the great hole in his mangled hand, he said, with a quiet and far-away look in his deep dark eyes: ‘Poor Cone! I’m sure he’d be sorry if he knew what trouble I have to write with these stiff fingers of mine.’”

This anecdote of Mr. Stephens' career has been preserved, and is still told with considerable emphasis in Georgia, as illustrative of a state of society which has been materially changed since. The present writer heard the incident impressively related during a recent visit to Atlanta, and came to the conclusion that it was the most sanguinary story in connection with commonplace republican politics in the nineteenth century, that had ever come to his hearing. It properly fills a place in this sketch as significant of one feature of the politics of the period in the South, and also as showing amid what social difficulties the rise of Alexander H. Stephens to pre-eminence was effected.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN OF 1860—ADDRESS AT AUGUSTA, GA., IN 1859—A REMARKABLE PREDICTION—IMPORTANT ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE AT MILLEDGEVILLE, GA.

IN the Autumn of 1859, the name of Mr. Stephens was prominently mentioned as a candidate for the presidency. One of the leading statesmen of the South gave the following grounds for his nomination:

1. "He is the undoubted choice of a large majority of the people of Georgia.

2. "He is a true man and an enlightened practical statesman, who would administer the government with ability and economy, in strict accordance with the principles observed in the early and better days of the republic.

3. "Because he is an available man for a candidate, the man for the times, enjoying the confidence and respect of the true friends of constitutional government throughout the Union.

4. "Because he has not sought the office, directly or indirectly, either by intriguing for the nomination or suffering himself to be made the instrument of any particular clique or faction; consequently, if nominated and elected would have no friends to reward or

enemies to punish, but will faithfully guard and protect the interests of the whole country, and every section of it, in obedience to the Constitution and the laws of the land."

The relations of Mr. Stephens to the memorable campaign which resulted in the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, and the downfall of African slavery in the South, were peculiar and impressive. As we have already shown, he had long foreseen the possibility of such a division of opinion between the two sections as should bring about antagonism certainly, possibly disunion.

In the earlier part of the canvass, although frequently solicited to speak, he refused, partly from a sense of its probable inutility, and partly on account of the condition of his health, which was at this time very feeble. He was, however, induced to appear at a public meeting in Augusta, September 1, 1859, and to deliver an address, during which he was compelled to sit down from exhaustion. A considerable portion of this speech was devoted to an examination of the political position of Judge Douglas, one of the two Democratic candidates, and was practically a recommendation to his hearers to vote for that gentleman. Proceeding, he made the following emphatic reference to the condition of affairs:

"I do not feel, fellow citizens, as if in justice to myself I ought to attempt to say more to-night; but there is no cause in which I would more willingly die than in the cause of my country, and I would just as soon fall here, at this time, in the advocacy of those principles upon which its past glory has been achieved, its present prosperity and its future hopes depend, as anywhere

else, or on any other occasion. I told you at the outset that the signs of the times portend evil. I gave you this as my deliberate judgment; the future must make its own disclosures. But you must not be surprised to see these states, now so peaceful, contented, prosperous and happy, embroiled in civil war, in less than twelve months. There are occasions too grave for excitement or any appeal to the passions. Believe me, I mean all I say; the most terrific tornadoes, those which demolish cities, destroy whole fleets and sweep everything before them, come most unexpectedly; so do the most violent revolutions amongst men. The human passions are the same everywhere. They are dangerous elements for public men, politicians, and party leaders to deal with. The condition of the country threatens the most violent conflict of sectional feeling, antipathy and animosity at no distant day. Should an outbreak occur, where is the power that can control it? A ball may be put in motion by one who cannot stop it; a fire may be kindled by hands that cannot quench it; those who begin revolutions seldom end them."

During the progress of the campaign, Mr. Stephens made two or three other speeches, which were not reported. "His speech in Columbus, Georgia," says Mr. Cleveland, "was one of the grandest efforts of his life, and of most wonderful effect upon his audience. In the midst of his impressive appeal to 'stand by the Constitution in any and every event,' the vast crowd arose to their feet as one man; and while venerable ministers of the gospel and dignified statesmen and citizens seemed to vie with each other in enthusiasm, the prolonged shouts of applause stopped for a while the utterance of



## ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS.

the orator." In his speech at Dalton, Georgia, says the same writer, "he arose with a borrowed expression of sad but sublime pity for the delusions and sions of his countrymen. 'Oh Jerusalem, Jer thou that killest the prophets and stonest them are sent unto thee, how often would I have thy children together even as a hen gather chickens under her wings, but ye would not.' His whole effort was to rouse the people to a sense of impending danger, to impress upon them the importance of adhering to their old established, and of sustaining throughout the common those men who were standing by those principles as the only means of maintaining the Constitution and Union under it."

Shortly after, Judge Douglas made a speech at Atlanta, in which, while expressing his own views in regard to the serious condition of the times, his remarks significantly sustained the position occupied by Mr. Stephens. Mr. Douglas said, "I hold that there is no grievance of which we complain, for which disunion would afford an adequate remedy. I believe there can be no grievance in this country for which the Constitution and laws will not afford ample remedy within the Union. All that is necessary is that each and every clause of the Constitution shall be carried into effect in good faith. Every right guaranteed by that instrument, every duty imposed by it, must be carefully protected and faithfully performed. So long as we live under a Constitution which is the supreme law of all the states, it must be executed in such a manner as to afford equal rights and equal protection to the citizens of all the states of this confederacy."

## THE LIFE OF

election of Mr. Lincoln, which roused the South to action as one man, brought Mr. Stephens to the front of battle, where, for a brief space he was the most marked and emphatic figure of the agitation which was then beginning—impressive and majestic, the bulwark of resistance against the fierce surges of secessionism, which now threatened to overwhelm the Union. On November 14, 1860, he went to Milledgeville where the Legislature was in session, and before the assembly delivered an address which has become famous and a part of the history of the period. As an important address we desire to quote at some length, since, although it exerted no perceptible influence over the course of events, it furnishes material evidence both as to the character of Mr. Stephens and concerning his political convictions on the great questions at issue. After a few words of introduction, Mr. Stephens continued as follows:

“My object is not to stir up strife, but to allay it; not to appeal to your passions, but to your reason. Good government can never be built up or sustained by the impulse of passion. I wish to address myself to your good sense, to your good judgment, and if, after hearing, you disagree, let us agree to disagree, and part as we met, friends. We all have the same object, the same interest. That people should disagree in republican governments upon questions of public policy is natural. That men should disagree upon all matters connected with human investigation, whether relating to science or human conduct, is natural. Hence, in free governments parties will arise. But a free people should express their different opinions with liberality

and charity, with no acrimony toward those of their fellows, when honestly and sincerely given. These are my feelings to-night.

“Let us, therefore, reason together. It is not my purpose to say aught to wound the feelings of any individual who may be present; and if in the ardency with which I shall express my opinions, I shall say anything which may be deemed too strong, let it be set down to the zeal with which I advocate my own convictions. There is with me no intention to irritate or offend.

“Fellow-citizens, we are all launched in the same bark; we are all in the same craft in the wide political ocean—the same destiny awaits us all for weal or for woe. We have been launched in the good old ship that has been upon the waves for three quarters of a century, which has been in many tempests and storms, has many times been in peril, and patriots have often feared that they should have to give it up, yea, have at times almost given it up; but still the gallant ship is afloat. Though new storms now howl around us, and the tempest beats heavily against us, I say to you, don't give up the ship; don't abandon her yet. If she can possibly be preserved, and our rights, interests, and security be maintained, the object is worth the efforts. Let us not, on account of disappointment and chagrin at the reverse of an election, give up all as lost. But let us see what can be done to prevent a wreck. . . .

“The first question that presents itself is, shall the people of the South secede from the Union in consequence of the election of Mr. Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States? My countrymen, I tell you frankly, candidly and earnestly, that I do not think that they ought. In my judgment, the election

of no man, constitutionally chosen to that high office, is sufficient cause for any State to separate from the Union. It ought to stand by and aid still in maintaining the Constitution of the country. To make a point of resistance to the government, to withdraw from it because a man has been constitutionally elected, puts us in the wrong. We are pledged to maintain the Constitution. Many of us have sworn to support it. Can we, therefore, for the mere election of a man to the presidency, and that, too, in accordance with the prescribed forms of the Constitution, make a point of resistance to the government, without becoming the breakers of that sacred instrument ourselves, by withdrawing ourselves from it? Would we not be in the wrong? Whatever fate is to befall this country, let it never be laid to the charge of the people of the South, and especially to the people of Georgia, that we were untrue to our national engagements. Let the fault and the wrong rest upon others. If all our hopes are to be blasted, if the Republic is to go down, let us be found to the last moment standing on the deck with the Constitution of the United States waving over our heads. (Applause). Let the fanatics of the North break the Constitution, if such is their fell purpose. Let the responsibility be upon them. I shall speak, presently, more of their acts; but let not the South, let us not be the ones to commit the aggression. We went into the election with this people. The result was different from what we wished; but the election has been constitutionally held. Were we to make a point of resistance to the government and go out of the Union on that account, the record would be made up hereafter against us. . .

“My countrymen, I am not of those who believe this Union has been a curse up to this time. True men,

men of integrity, entertain different views from me on this subject. I do not question their right to do so; I would not impugn their motives in so doing. Nor will I undertake to say that this government of our fathers is perfect. There is nothing perfect in this world of human origin; nothing connected with human nature, from man himself to any of his works. You may select the wisest and best men for your judges, and yet how many defects are there in the administration of justice? You may select the wisest and best men for your legislators, and yet how many defects are apparent in your laws? And it is so in our government. But that this government of our fathers, with all its defects, comes nearer the objects of all good governments than any other on the face of the earth, is my settled conviction. . . .

“It may be that we are all that we are in ‘spite of the general government,’ but it may be that without it we should have been far different from what we are now. It is true there is no equal part of the earth with natural resources superior, perhaps, to ours. That portion of this country known as the Southern States, stretching from the Chesapeake to the Rio Grande, is fully equal to the picture drawn by the honorable and eloquent senator last night, in all natural capacities. But how many ages, centuries, passed before these capacities were developed, to reach this advanced stage of civilization? There, these same hills, rich in ore, same rivers, same valleys and plains, are as they have been since they came from the hand of the Creator. Uneducated and uncivilized men roamed over them, for how long no history informs us.

“It is only under our institutions that they could be developed. Their development is the result of the enterprise of our people under operations of the government and institutions under which we have lived. Even our people, without these, never would have done it. The organization of society has much to do with the development of the natural resources of any country or any land. The institutions of a people, political and moral, are the matrix in which the germ of their organic structure quickens into life, takes root, and develops in form, nature and character. Our institutions constitute the basis, the matrix, from whence spring all our characteristics of development and greatness. (Look at Greece! There is the same fertile soil, the same blue sky, the same inlets and harbors, the same Ægean, the same Olympus—there is the same land where Homer sung, where Pericles spoke—it is in nature the same old Greece; but it is living Greece no more. (Applause.) )

“Descendants of the same people inhabit the country; yet what is the reason of this mighty difference? In the midst of present degradation we see the glorious fragments of ancient works of art—temples with ornaments and inscriptions that excite wonder and admiration, the remains of a once high order of civilization, which have outlived the language they spoke. Upon them all, *Iehabod* is written—their glory has departed. Why is this so? I answer, their institutions have been destroyed. These were but the fruits of their forms of government, the matrix from which their grand development sprung; and when once the institutions of our people shall have been destroyed, there is no earthly power that can bring back the Promethean spark to kindle them here

again any more than in that ancient land of eloquence, poetry and song. (Applause.) The same may be said of Italy. Where is Rome, once the mistress of the world? There are the same seven hills now, the same soil, the same natural resources; nature is the same; but what a ruin of human greatness meets the eye of the traveler throughout the length and breadth of that most down-trodden land! Why have not the people of that heaven-favored clime the spirit that animated their fathers? Why this sad difference? It is the destruction of her institutions that has caused it. And, my countrymen, if we shall in an evil hour rashly pull down and destroy those institutions which the patriotic hand of our fathers labored so long and so hard to build up, and which have done so much for us and for the world, who can venture the prediction that similar results will not ensue? Let us avoid them if we can. I trust that the spirit is amongst us that will enable us to do it. Let us not rashly try the experiment of change, of pulling down and destroying, for, as in Greece and Italy and the South American republics, and in every other place, whenever our liberty is once lost, it may never be restored to us again. (Applause.) . . . .

“When I look around and see our prosperity in everything—agriculture, commerce, art, science, and every department of progress, physical, mental, and moral—certainly, in the face of such an exhibition, if we can, without the loss of power or any essential right or interest, remain in the Union, it is our duty to ourselves and to posterity to do so. Let us not unwisely yield to this temptation. Our first parents, the first progenitors of the human race, were not without a like temptation when in the Garden of Eden. They were led to



believe that their condition would be bettered—that their eyes would be opened—and that they would become as gods. They in an evil hour yielded; instead of becoming gods, they only saw their own nakedness.

“I look upon this country with our institutions, as the Eden of the world, the Paradise of the universe. It may be that out of it we may become greater and more prosperous; but I am candid and sincere in telling you that I fear if we yield to passion, and without sufficient cause shall take that step, that instead of becoming greater or more peaceful, prosperous, and happy—instead of becoming gods, we will become demons, and at no distant day commence cutting one another's throats. This is my apprehension. Let us, therefore, whatever we do, meet these difficulties, great as they are, like wise and sensible men, and consider them in the light of all consequences which may attend our actions. Let us see first clearly where the path of duty leads, and then we may not fear to tread therein.”



## CHAPTER V.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA SECESSION ORDINANCE, AND CONVENTIONS IN SIX OTHER SOUTHERN STATES—THE GEORGIA CONVENTION—MR. STEPHENS' VIEWS ON SECESSION—HE IS ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE GEORGIA CONVENTION, AND VOTES AGAINST SECESSION—ELECTED VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERACY.

ON December 20, 1860, the South Carolina convention of the people passed an Ordinance of Secession, repealing the ordinance which ratified the Constitution of 1788, and thus restoring South Carolina to the position of a separate and independent sovereign State. The six States of Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas followed the example of South Carolina, and called conventions. That of Georgia was called to meet at Milledgeville, on January 16th, 1861. In a letter to his brother, Linton Stephens, written at about this time, Alexander H. Stephens expressed his views concerning such action as had already taken place, or was impending on the part of the Southern States. In this letter he wrote as follows:

“I have read the address put forth by the convention at Charleston to the Southern States. It has not im-

pressed me favorably. In it South Carolina clearly shows that it is not her intention to be satisfied with any redress of grievances. Indeed, she hardly deigns to specify any. The slavery question is almost entirely ignored. Her greatest complaint seems to be the tariff, though there is but little intelligent or intelligible thought on that subject. Perhaps the less she said about it the better. For the present tariff, on which she secedes, is just what her own senators and members in Congress made it. There are general and vague charges about consolidation, despotism &c., and the South having, under the operation of the general government, been reduced to a minority incapable of protecting itself, etc. This complaint I do not think well founded. It arises more from a spirit of peevishness, or restless fretfulness, than from calm deliberate judgment. The truth is, the South, almost in mass, has voted, I think, for every measure of general legislation that has passed both houses and become law, for the last ten years. Indeed, with but few exceptions, the South has controlled the government in its every important action, from the beginning. The protective policy was once, for a time, carried against the South; but that was subsequently completely changed. Our policy ultimately prevailed. The South put in power—or joined a united country in putting in power and sustaining the administration of Washington, for eight years. She put in and sustained Jefferson eight years, Madison eight years, Jackson eight years, Van Buren four years, Tyler four years, Polk four years, Pierce four years, and Buchanan four years. That is, they have aided in making and sustaining the administration for sixty years out of the seventy-two of the government's existence. Does this look like we were or are

in an abject minority, at the mercy of a despotic northern majority rapacious to rob and plunder us? It is true, we are in a minority, and have been a long time. It is true also that the party at the North advocate principles which would lead to a despotism, and they would rob us if they had the power—I have no doubt of that. But by the prudent and wise counsels of southern statesmen, this party has been kept in the minority in the past, and by the same prudent and wise statesmanship on our part I can but hope and think it can be so for many long years to come. Sound constitutional men enough at the North have been found to unite with the South to keep that dangerous and mischievous faction in the minority, and though Lincoln has been elected, it ought to be recollected that he has succeeded by a minority vote, and even this was the result of a dissension in the ranks of the conservatives or constitutional men north and south, a most unfortunate and lamentable event, and the more so from the fact that it was designedly effected by men who wished to use it for ulterior ends and objects.

“Now we have real causes of complaint against the North,—or at least against certain States of the North,—causes which, if not redressed, would justify the extreme course, the *ultima ratio*, on the part of the South. These, however, are barely glanced at in the South Carolina address. These causes are the ‘Personal Liberty Acts,’ as they are called, in several of the Northern States, and other acts of their Legislatures which openly and avowedly refuse obedience to, or compliance with, their constitutional obligation to return fugitive slaves. These acts are in flagrant violation of constitutional obligations; and they con-

stitute the only cause, in my opinion, which can justify secession. All other complaints are founded on threatened dangers which may never come and which I feel very sure could be averted if the South would pursue a judicious and wise course. Whether we ought to secede in consequence of the faithlessness of those Northern States alluded to is simply a question of policy. It is one on which able men and true men differ. One thing is certain: the South would be justified in doing it. For nothing is better settled by all law, recognized by savage as well as by civilized people, than that a compact broken by one party to it is not binding on the other. But if we secede, I should like to see it put on the right ground; and while I think the ground would fully justify the act, yet I do not think it would at present be wise to resort to that remedy. For I feel confident that, if we should adopt the right course, those states would recede and repeal their obnoxious statutes. Hence I am mortified and grieved when I read such papers as the South Carolina manifesto. It is not on the right line.

“But I am grieved at almost everything I see and hear every day. The times are fearfully distempered. I am fully persuaded of one thing, and that is, there is no power on earth that can bring any good out of the present state of things. The progress of events cannot be arrested. . . .

“I must confess in the darkness and gloom that hang upon the future I see no prospect and but little hope for good government ever again in this country, North or South. The mischievous faction at the North will bear sway there. Constitutional liberty they never understood, or did not like, if they did. How it will be with us at the South time must disclose; but

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draw up the rules for the Southern Congress. After the formation of the Constitution, Alexander H. Stephens was unanimously elected Vice-President of the Confederate States of America. In returning thanks, on the occasion of the serenade, on the evening of his election, Mr. Stephens said:

“Sufficient to say that this day a new republic has been born—the Confederate States of America has been ushered into existence to take its place amongst the nations of the earth—under a temporary or provisional government, it is true, but soon to be followed by one of a permanent character, which, while it surrenders none of our ancient rights and liberties, will secure more perfectly, we trust, the peace, security and domestic tranquility that should be the objects of all governments.

“What is to be the future of this new government—the fate of this new republic—will depend upon ourselves. Six States only, at present, constitute it—but six stars, as yet, appear in our constellation—more, we trust, will soon be added. By the time of the adoption of the constitution of the permanent government, we may have a greater number than the original thirteen—of the original Union, and with more than three times their population, wealth and power. With such a beginning, the prospect of the future presents strong hopes to the patriot’s heart, for a bright and prosperous career. But what that future shall be, depends, I say, upon ourselves and those who shall come after us. Ours is a republic. And all republics, to be permanent and prosperous, must be supported by the virtue, intelligence, integrity, and patriotism of the people. These are the corner-stones upon which the temple of popular

liberty must be constructed, to stand securely and permanently. Resting ours upon these, we need fear nothing from without or from within. With a climate unsurpassed by any on earth; with staples and productions which control the commerce of the world; with institutions, so far as regards our organic and social policy, in strict conformity to nature and the laws of the Creator, whether read in the Book of Inspiration, or in the great book of manifestations around us, we have all the natural elements essential to the attainment of the highest degree of honor, glory and renown.

“These institutions have been much assailed. It is our mission to vindicate the great truths on which they rest, and with them to exhibit the highest type of civilization which it is possible for human society to reach. In doing this, our policy should be marked by a desire to preserve and maintain peace with all other states and peoples. If this cannot be done, let not the fault lie at our door. While we should make aggressions on none, we should be prepared to repel them if made by others, let it come from whatever quarter it may. We ask of all others simply to be let alone, and to be permitted to work after our own safety, security, and happiness, in our own way, without molesting or giving offence to any other people.

“Let then peace, fraternity, and liberal commercial relations with all the world, be our motto. With these principles, without any envy toward other states in the line of policy they may mark out for themselves, we will rather invite them to a generous rivalry in all that develops the highest qualities of our nature.”



## CHAPTER VI.

THE "CORNER-STONE" SPEECH AT SAVANNAH—MR. STEPHENS' VIEWS CONCERNING SLAVERY—SPECIAL CONFEDERATE COMMISSIONER TO VIRGINIA—ADDRESS AT RICHMOND BEFORE THE CONVENTION.

ON March 21, 1861, Mr. Stephens delivered at Savannah, what has since been known as "The Corner-stone Speech," this title being based upon his assertion of his opinion of the policy of the Southern States in regard to slavery, which he recognized as the "corner-stone" of the new government. In setting forth his views as to this question, Mr. Stephens made the following language:

"But not to be tedious in enumerating the changes for the better, allow me to allude—though last, not least. The new constitution at rest, *forever*, all the agitating question of our peculiar institution—African slavery amongst us—the proper *status* of the negro of civilization. This was the immediate rupture and present revolution. The forecast, had anticipated this, as the old Union would split.' He conjecture with him, is no

whether he fully comprehended the great truth upon which that rock *stood* and *stands*, may be doubted. The prevailing ideas entertained by him and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in *principle*, socially, morally, and politically. It was an evil they knew not well how to deal with, but the general opinion of the men of that day was that, somehow or other in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away. This idea, though not incorporated in the Constitution, was the prevailing idea at that time. The Constitution it is true, secured every essential guarantee to the institution while it should last, and hence no argument can be justly urged against the constitutional guarantees thus secured, because of the common sentiment of the day. These ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong; they rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the government built upon it fell when the 'storm came and blew.

The new government is founded upon exactly the opposite basis; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition.

The new government is the first in the history of this country to be based upon this great physical, and moral truth. This truth has

been the process of its development, like the process of the various departments of science, even so amongst us. Many of our people will recollect well that this truth

was not generally admitted, even within their day. The errors of the past generation still clung to many as late as twenty years ago. Those at the North who still cling to these errors with a zeal above knowledge, we justly denominate fanatics. All fanaticism springs from an aberration of the mind—from a defect in reasoning. It is a species of insanity. One of the most striking characteristics of insanity, in many instances, is forming correct conclusions from fancied or erroneous premises. So with the anti-slavery fanatics. Their conclusions are right if their premises were. They assume that the negro is equal, and hence conclude that he is entitled to equal privileges and rights with the white man. If their premises were correct, their conclusions would be logical and just—but their premises being wrong, their whole argument fails. I recollect once of having heard a gentleman from one of the Northern States, of great power and ability, announce in the House of Representatives, with imposing effect, that we of the South would be compelled ultimately to yield upon this subject of slavery, that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics, as it was in physics or mechanics. That the principle would ultimately prevail. That we, in maintaining slavery as it exists with us, were warring against a principle, a principle founded in nature, the principle of the equality of men. The reply I made him was, that upon his own grounds, we should, ultimately succeed, and that he and his associates, in this crusade against our institutions, would ultimately fail. The truth announced, that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics as it was in physics and mechanics, I admitted; but told him that it was he, and those acting

with him, who were warring against a principle. They were attempting to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal.

“In the conflict thus far, success has been on our side, complete throughout the length and breadth of the Confederate States. It is upon this, as I have stated, our social fabric is firmly planted; and I cannot permit myself to doubt the ultimate success of a full recognition of this principle throughout the civilized and enlightened world.

“As I have stated, the truth of this principle may be slow in development, as all truths are and ever have been, in the various branches of science. It was so with the principles announced by Galileo—it was so with Adam Smith and his principles of political economy. It was so with Harvey, and his theory of the circulation of the blood. It is stated that not a single one of the medical profession, living at the time of the announcement of the truths made by him, admitted them. Now, they are universally acknowledged. May we not, therefore, look with confidence to the ultimate universal acknowledgment of the truths upon which our system rests? It is the first government ever instituted upon the principles in strict conformity to nature, and the ordination of Providence, in furnishing the materials of human society. Many governments have been founded upon the principle of the subordination and serfdom of certain classes of the same race; such were and are in violation of the laws of nature. Our system commits no such violation of nature's laws. With us, all of the white race, however high or low, rich or poor, are equal in the eye of the law. Not so with the negro. Subordination is his place. He, by nature, or by the curse against Canaan,

is fitted for that condition which he occupies in our system. The architect in the construction of buildings, lays the foundation with the proper material—the granite; then comes the brick or the marble. The substratum of our society is made of the material fitted by nature for it, and by experience we know, that it is best, not only for the superior, but for the inferior race, that it should be so. It is, indeed, in conformity with the ordinance of the Creator. It is not for us to inquire into the wisdom of his ordinances, or to question them. For his own purposes, he has made one race to differ from another, as he has made ‘one star to differ from another star in glory.’

“The great objects of humanity are best attained when there is conformity to his laws and decrees, in the formation of governments as well as in all things else. Our confederacy is founded upon principles in strict conformity with these laws. This stone which was rejected by the first builders ‘is become the chief of the corner’—the real ‘corner-stone’—in our new edifice.”

On April 23, 1861, Mr. Stephens appeared before the Virginia Secession Convention, at Richmond, as a special commissioner from the newly formed Confederate States, to the government of Virginia, to invite that State to a representation in the Confederate councils. In the course of his address, Mr. Stephens spoke as follows:

“Under the latitudinarian construction of the Constitution which prevails at the North, the general idea is maintained that the will of the majority is supreme; and as to constitutional checks or restraints, they have no just conception of them. The Constitution was, at

first, mainly the work of Southern men, and Virginia men at that. The government under it lasted only so long as it was kept in its proper sphere with due regard to its limitations, checks and balances. This, from the origin of the government, was effected mainly by Southern statesmen. It was only when all further effort seemed to be hopeless to keep the federal government within its proper sphere of delegated powers, that the Confederate States, each for itself, resumed those powers and looked out for new safeguards for their rights and domestic tranquility. These are found not in abandoning the Constitution, but in adhering only to those who will faithfully sustain it.

“We have rescued the Constitution from utter annihilation. This is our conviction, and we believe history will so record the fact. You have seen what we have done. Our Constitution has been published. Perhaps most of you have read it. If not I have a copy here, which is at the service of any who may wish to examine it. It is the old Constitution, with all its essentials, and some changes, of which I may speak presently.

“It is upon this basis we are looking to your union with us; first, by the adoption of the provisional Constitution, and then of the permanent one, in such a way as you may consider best, under the limitations of your powers. This I may be pardoned for pressing upon the convention, and expressing the hope that they may do it, utterly ignoring all past differences of opinion.

“In all bodies of men, differences of opinion may be expected; but the disagreements and differences with you, as was the case with us, will perhaps be found to relate more as to the mode of action, than to the propriety and necessity of action of some sort. As to differ-

ences in the past, on the subject of union and secession, let them be buried and forgotten forever.

“My position and views upon these questions in the past may be known to you. If not, it may be proper to state, and I feel no reluctance in declaring, in your presence here in the capitol of the old commonwealth of Virginia, that there never breathed a human spirit on the soil of America more strongly and devoutly attached to the Union of our fathers than I. I was, however, in favor of no Union that did not secure perfect equality and protection of all rights guaranteed under the Constitution. I was not insensible of the fact that several of the Northern States had openly repudiated their constitutional obligations, and that if the principles of the present dominant party should be carried out, ultimate separation was inevitable. But still, I did trust that there was wisdom and patriotism enough at the North, when aroused, to correct the evils, to right the wrongs and to do us justice. I trusted even to the last, for some hopeful reaction in the popular sentiment at the North.

“I was attached to the Union, however, not on account of the Union *per se*, but I was attached to it for what was its soul, its vitality and spirit; those were the living embodiments of the great principles of self-government, springing from the great truth, that the just powers of all governments are derived from the consent of the governed, as it was transmitted to us by our fathers. This is the foundation on which alone all constitutional liberty is and must be based—and to these principles I am to-day attached just as ardently as I ever was before, and I now announce to you my solemn conviction that the only hope you have for the preservation of these principles, is by your alliance with



those who have rescued, restored and re-established them in the Constitution of the Confederate States—there is no hope in the States North.

“The disagreements that existed in our State as to the course that we should pursue, before the last resort of secession was adopted, were more as to the mode and manner of redress, than as to the cause of the grievance or the grievance requiring redress. I take this occasion, in passing, to state to you, that in our convention there was considerable difference of opinion on this view of the subject. It may not be known to you that on that occasion, I disagreed with the majority on the course adopted. My vote was recorded against the secession ordinance in our State. I was for making one more effort, and for getting the whole South united if possible in that effort for redress.

“But when the State in her sovereign capacity determined otherwise, my judgment was yielded to hers. My allegiance was due to her. My fortunes were linked with hers; her cause was my cause; and her destiny was my destiny. A large minority in that convention voted as I did. But after secession was determined on by the majority, a resolution was drawn up to the effect, that whereas the lack of unanimity on the passage of the ordinance, was owing more to a disagreement as to the proper mode at the time for a redress of existing wrongs and threatened wrongs, than as to the fact of the existence of such wrongs as required redress, therefore, after the mode and manner was adopted by a majority of the convention, that all of us, as an evidence of our determination to maintain the State in her chosen remedy, should sign the ordinance; and with that determination under



that resolution, every member of the convention except six, signed it. Those six also declared upon record a like determination on their part. So our State became a unit upon the measure, when it was resolved upon. All anterior differences amongst us were dropped. The cause of Georgia was the cause of us all; and so I trust it will be in Virginia. Let all past differences be forgotten. Whether, if some other course had been adopted, our rights could have ultimately been secured in the old Union, is a problem now that can never be solved. I am free to confess, as I frankly do, that the late indications afford strong evidence that the majority at the North were bent upon our destruction at every cost and every hazard. At all events, we know that our only hope now is in our own strong arms and stout hearts, with unity among ourselves. Our course is adopted. We can take no steps backward. The time for compromise, if it ever existed, is past. . . .

“One good and wise feature in our new or revised constitution is, that we have put to rest the vexed question of slavery forever, so far as the confederate legislative halls are concerned. On this subject, from which sprung the immediate cause of our late troubles and threatened dangers, you will indulge me in a few remarks as not irrelevant to the occasion. The condition of the negro race amongst us presents a peculiar phase of republican civilization and constitutional liberty. To some, the problem seems hard to understand. The difficulty is in theory, not in practical demonstration; that works well enough—theories in government, as in all things else, must yield to facts. No truth is clearer than that the best form or system of government for any people or society is that which

secures the greatest amount of happiness, not to the greatest number, but to all the constituent elements of that society, community or State. If our system does not accomplish this; if it is not best for the negro as well as for the white man; for the inferior as well as the superior race, it is wrong in principle. But if it does, or is capable of doing this, then it is right, and can never be successfully assailed by reason or logic. That the negroes with us, under masters who care for, provide for and protect them, are better off, and enjoy more of the blessings of good government than their race does in any other part of the world, statistics abundantly prove. As a race, the African is inferior to the white man. Subordination to the white man is his normal condition. He is not his equal by nature, and cannot be made so by human laws or human institutions. Our system, therefore, so far as regards this inferior race, rests upon this great immutable law of nature. It is founded not upon wrong or injustice, but upon the eternal fitness of things. Hence its harmonious working for the benefit and advantage of both. Why one race was made inferior to another is not for us to inquire. The statesman and the Christian, as well as the philosopher, must take things as they find them, and do the best he can with them as he finds them.

“The great truth, I repeat, upon which our system rests, is the inferiority of the African. The enemies of our institutions ignore this truth. . . . . We have heard much of the higher law. I believe myself in the higher law. We stand upon that higher law. I would defend and support no constitution that is against the higher law. I mean by that the law of nature and of God, Human constitutions and human

laws that are made against the law of Nature or of God, ought to be overturned; and if Seward was right, the Constitution which he was sworn to support, and is now requiring others to swear to support, ought to have been overthrown long ago. It ought never to have been made. But in point of fact it is he and his associates in this crusade against us, who are warring against the higher law—we stand upon the laws of the Creator, upon the highest of all laws. It is the fanatics of the North, who are warring against the decrees of God Almighty, in their attempts to make things equal which he has made unequal. My assurance of ultimate success in this controversy is strong from the conviction that we stand upon the right. . . . No human efforts or human laws can change the leopard's spots or the Ethiopian's skin. These are the works of Providence—in whose hands are the fortunes of men as well as the destiny of nations and the distinctions of races."

## CHAPTER VII.

NORTHERN IMPRESSIONS OF MR. STEPHENS—CHAGRIN AT HIS ACCEPTANCE OF SECESSION—THE REAL “CONSISTENCY” OF HIS ACTION—HIS ADVICE AND COUNSEL TO THE SOUTH—HIS OPINION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF COTTON AS A “COMMERCIAL KING”—HIS DIFFERENCE WITH THE CONFEDERATE GOVERNMENT.

THESE quotations from Mr. Stephens’ utterances in the few months which elapsed between his address before the Legislature at Milledgeville, after the election of Lincoln, and his speech at Savannah, have been given at length, on account of the light which they throw upon the nature of the man, indomitable and unswerving from the convictions which had once taken possession of his mind—yet subordinating his actions and even his opinions to constituted authority, when this had once legitimately declared itself.

The people of the North had learned with mingled surprise and delight of the position taken by Mr. Stephens in his speech of the 14th of November. So important was it deemed that Mr. Lincoln himself wrote an autograph note to Mr. Stephens, dated Springfield, November 30, 1860, asking him for a revised copy of the speech. It was indeed assumed—

so thoroughly recognized was Mr. Stephens' powerful influence—that in the face of his opposition, no ordinance of secession would be passed by the State of Georgia.

That this was a grave error, and a thorough misunderstanding of the determination of all the Southern people, was soon shown by the passage of the Act in question. Mr. Stephens, however, continued to be regarded as so much a friend of the Union, that his personal adherence to secession was deemed not only inconsistent with his speech before the Legislature, but incompatible with his known Union sentiments. The astonishment and chagrin of the North was therefore universal, when he accepted the Vice-Presidency of the Confederacy, and to these sentiments were added a feeling of positive anger and almost contempt when he completed his seeming recantation by the terrible "corner-stone" speech at Savannah. From this period until the close of the war, the great "Georgia Commoner" was looked upon by his Northern critics as one who had descended from the lofty pinnacle to which he alone, of all the Southern statesmen, had reached, and who, either from personal interest, or because of moral cowardice, had surrendered his convictions, and with them his claim to an imperishable and honored memory.

But the reader will have, we hope, long before this, perceived the entire consistency of Mr. Stephens' later position with his former, and with the principles of his entire political life.

No influence is more domineering or tyrannical than the element which we term consistency. Fettered by this, the human mind is not permitted either to learn by the experience of the past or to form conclusions by forecasting the future; and those who most cry out and

insist upon consistency in others, mean, by the term, agreement with their own opinions, rather than with that which is just or right. In every instance in Mr. Stephens' political life where a question was finally decided by legislative or other authority, it had been the habit of his mind and his act to submit, not only gracefully but logically. With him, once a subject was concluded, there should be no more discussion or resistance in the matter in hand: 1. He had been a logical and consistent supporter of the Union all his life; he still held to his opinions in that regard. 2. He had believed in the institution of slavery as divinely ordained, from the time when he could first distinguish the difference between slavery and freedom. 3. He believed in the *right* of a state to secede, under certain circumstances, which he frequently enumerated. In the case of the present secession movement, he opposed it on the ground, first, that no occasion for it had justly arisen within the Union, and which could not and probably would not be rectified within the Union: and, second, because he believed the movement to be impolitic, unlikely to succeed, and certain to result in disaster to the South if it failed to succeed.

Consistently with these views, he opposed secession until it had become a fixed fact. Consistently with the same views, he announced slavery to be the cornerstone of the new government, of which he became the second executive officer.

Mr. Stephens' theory of citizenship in the republic was a peculiar one, and on this he based his action in going out with his state. He simply did not believe that any man could be a citizen of the United States, or that the United States, as such, could create or accept citizens. He recognized only citizenship as belong-

ing to states in their individual capacity; these states being confederated, to be sure, but without, by this fact, having the political status of any individual member of the population altered or created.

It will thus be seen that, holding the opinions which he did, Mr. Stephens could not honestly have taken any different action from that which resulted from his convictions, and which was certainly both logically sound and sincere.

During the Summer of 1861, Mr. Stephens was very active in his interest in affairs, and though for a time prostrated with sickness at his home in Crawfordsville, was even there visited by public men, with whom he advised freely and at length concerning the important measures which were now a topic of general concern.

Naturally, the first great need of the South, as it was in the North, was money. As Mr. Stephens put it in one of his letters to his brother Linton, about this time, "Independence and liberty will require money as well as blood. The people must meet both with promptness and firmness." As to this, he believed in a special tax, but also in the value of cotton for this purpose. " 'Cotton was King' men said; but they should remember that it was not a *political* but a *commercial* king."

The matter of raising a navy was at this time one which had awakened general interest, and this subject came before Mr. Stephens, and regarding it he made the following suggestion:

"If the government would now buy one million of bales, for which they might afford to give ten cents a pound, which is two cents more than the market price, with these they could raise a navy that could compete successfully with the North. It is vain to expect relief from the blockade from foreign powers. We alone



could relieve ourselves of that; and our cotton, unless it was put to the use suggested, would be of little importance to us."

But in his opinion on this subject, and as very soon appeared on many others, Mr. Stephens differed widely from the prevailing theories of the other members of the Confederate government. The tone of public opinion in the South was represented by such men as Jefferson Davis and Robert Toombs; men whose impressions and hopes were based rather on their wishes and an enthusiastic confidence in the resources of the South,—which of course did them no discredit—than on sound judgment and a statesmanlike recognition of facts and conditions as they actually existed. But the whole South was now swept by a mad passion of excited self-confidence, in the face of which the calm and dispassionate reasoning to logical conclusions from wise premises which characterized Mr. Stephens, appeared nothing short of treason to the dominant Southern idea.

For, although Mr Stephens had accepted the situation and gone with his State, he could not be considered in accord with the leaders of opinion in the Confederacy, and as a matter of fact he opposed the policy of conscription, the suspension of the privilege of habeas corpus, the appointment of military governors in cities, and generally the subordination of the civil to military power. On these questions and others, he naturally clashed with the government. Moreover, he had but little confidence in the capacity of the men who represented the South in the Confederate Congress. To give his own language, "This is a very poor Congress. There are few men of ability in the House, in the Senate not more than two or three. Tom Semmes is



the ablest; the next are Barnwell, Hunter and Clay." He objected to the introduction of the West Point policy into the South, and as to this, he spoke as follows:

"If the West Point policy should prevail fully we shall be beaten. If the Southern volunteer should come to forget that he is a gentleman (and that is what the West Point men say he must do), then it will be merely a struggle between matter and matter, and the biggest and heaviest body will break the other. We have less *matter*, and to have equal *momentum* we must have greater *velocity* than our enemies,—so to call our spirit and the consciousness of being gentlemen."

On one occasion, in reply to a remark that the government had been acting with more energy lately, Mr. Stephens said: "The energy I discover now seems to me like that of a turtle after fire has been put upon his back."

Asked when he expected to go back to Richmond, he replied: "Not very soon; I can do no good there. The policy of the government is far against my judgment, and I am frequently embarrassed on account of this difference."

The wisdom which Mr. Stephens displayed in regard to the affairs of his own section, and which has since been generally acknowledged, was strangely at fault when applied to consideration of the state of the North and its promise for the future. Doubtless, like many wise judges on both sides, he was misled by wrong information. A glimpse of his error in this regard may be had from the following paragraph of a letter written to his brother Linton, in the Summer of 1862:—"It requires no statesmanship to see that the

North is already a despotism complete and fearful. The powers of it are daily becoming more widely displayed and more intensely felt. Its march is onward. Blood will soon flow there as it did in France under the Directory. There will never, I apprehend, be anything like constitutional liberty in that country again."

In one of his many conversations, Mr. Stephens gave utterance to sentiments concerning the working of self-government by the people, and specially having relation to the success or failure of the system of the United States, utterances which were substantially sound and which the conclusions of many reasoning men all over the country will to-day sustain.

"There was no fault in the Government of the United States. The difficulty was mainly with those in power and in the administration of it. The machinery was good and sound; it was from the bad working of it that the miseries came."

"But," it was insisted, "it was a failure. And if from that cause the failure is more certain and more melancholy, might we not as well give up the question?"

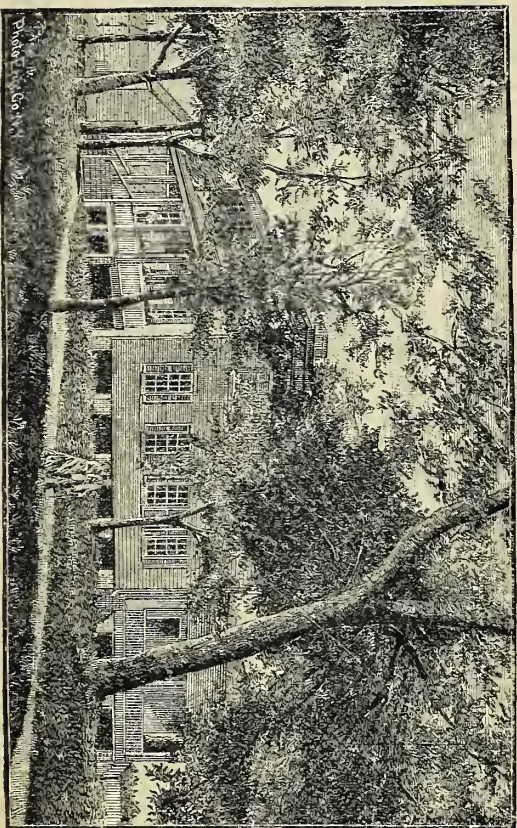
"By no means. I shall never be willing to give up constitutional liberty, or the doctrine that the people can easily and safely govern themselves upon the principles upon which our institutions rest. In our system, these principles rest upon the rights and sovereignty of the States. For their support are requisite virtue, intelligence, patriotism, and constancy on the part of the great body of the people. When I see the apparent indifference of so many among us on the questions involving these essential principles of our liberties, and the success of our system, I must

confess I have fears for the future. Still, I am far from giving it up. I think the system at the North is a failure. But our people are different. We have more virtue, and by far more political intelligence in the masses of our people than they have. The great body of our people here are honest, industrious, frugal, pure, and not disposed to look to Government for anything but wise and equal laws. In other words, they look to Government for nothing but justice. At the North the great mass look to Government as a means for a living by their wits in some way. Government with them is a license to rob and plunder in some way or other; and to get control of Government for these purposes is the highest object of their ambition. The people there, as well as their rulers, have been corrupted for years,—at least a large portion of them, if not the majority. The same thing is true of a portion of our people, and we have some corrupt leaders. But the great majority are not so. They understand their rights, and all they want of rulers is to give them good government. So long as this shall predominate I shall never despair of the principles of self-government with our people."

### CHAPTER III.

MR. STEPHENS' ILL HEALTH—"LIBERTY HALL"—DESCRIPTION OF HIS RESIDENCE AT CRAWFORDSVILLE—HOME LIFE AND HOSPITALITIES—PERSONAL APPEARANCE, AS DESCRIBED BY REV. W. H. MILBURN.

FROM all that has been written, it will have been seen that Mr. Stephens was, to use his own mode of expression, oft repeated, "of but little use to the Confederate Government." During the years of the war also, he was not exempt from the tortures and miseries of ill-health, which had so persistently remained with him through life. An extraordinary patience and serene submission to pain, which had always characterized him, enabled him however, to distract his mind from himself, in great measure, and to devote his thoughts and much of his time to the all-engrossing events of the period. As we have said, his home at Crawfordsville was frequently sought by public men with whom he conversed freely. He also wrote voluminously to his friends and specially to his brother Linton, giving frank expression of his opinions on public questions as they arose. During the Winter of 1863-64, his sufferings were extreme. New developments of disease, accompanied by excruciating suffering, strained his extraordinary constitution to the utmost. Notwithstanding this, a remarkable



LIBERTY HALL, MR. STEPHEN'S RESIDENCE.



feature of this period of his life, and indeed which had characterized it for the preceding twenty years, was the unflagging hospitality which was dispensed at "Liberty Hall," the well-known name of Mr. Stephens' residence at Crawfordsville.

This residence was purchased by Mr. Stephens in 1845, and then received from him the title which it ever afterwards retained. The town of Crawfordsville, sixty-four miles from the city of Augusta, stands on a slope of the Alleghenies, between the Chatahoochee and Savannah Rivers, and at an elevation of about six hundred feet above the level of the sea. For many years it has been a rather forgotten place, the Georgia Railroad running through it serving rather to mark its decline than to awaken it to new animation or prosperity. It may be doubted, however, if there be any spot in the State of Georgia more dear to its people. On an elevation just outside of the town, near an old church and graveyard, stands the unpretending structure, seen at intervals as one approaches, through a magnificent grove of oaks, in the midst of which it stands. It contains eight rooms; four of these on the upper floor being always, during the lifetime of the owner, prepared for the reception of the guests who almost constantly occupied them. In the rear of the building were the library and bedroom of Mr. Stephens, and, strangely and pathetically enough, the only ornament, so to speak, in the library of Alexander H. Stephens, was the bust of Daniel Webster. Concerning the nature of Mr. Stephens' home life, one of his biographers writes as follows:

"There was probably no home in Georgia where the old-fashioned virtue of hospitality was—and still is—



practiced on a more liberal scale than at Liberty Hall. For many years it has been Mr. Stephens' practice, during court week, to entertain all the lawyers in attendance from other counties. As he lived on the line of the railroad, every one who passed between Augusta and Atlanta, whether previously acquainted with him or not, felt entirely free to favor Mr. Stephens with a brief call—a visit of a day or two, or a stay of several weeks, as they might feel inclined. Some came out of respect, some from curiosity, some to ask pecuniary assistance, and many from the feeling that his house was open to everybody. As for the people of Taliaferro County, there was not a man, woman, or child there who did not feel as much at home in Mr. Stephens' house as in their own, which they were free to enter at any time and stay as long as they pleased. So it can be easily surmised that, although his personal manner of living has always been of the simplest kind, his domestic expenses have been exceedingly heavy. . . . .

“Rarely does a chance visitor call at Liberty Hall at dinner-time, that he does not find other guests, some of whom were as little expected as himself. Mr. Johnston has often seen a plain countryman walk into Mr. Stephens' office, where the latter was writing, and after an exchange of greetings not a word has been spoken until dinner was announced. Immediately after dinner the guest has departed with as little ceremony as graced his entry; very frequently first asking and receiving an order on the village store for groceries, or a pair of shoes, or a frock for his wife. It may be thought that this practice does not tend to improve the independence and self-respect of the stalwart yeomen of Taliaferro; but they seem to feel that they stand in a dif-



ferent and closer relation to Mr. Stephens than to the rest of their more affluent neighbors.

“Mr. Stephens, however, never allows himself to be incommoded by these visitations. If he is occupied, he welcomes his guests and then continues what he has in hand, leaving them to entertain themselves. His dinner-hour is never postponed; and whether his guests be few or many, they must content themselves with what is already prepared or can be got ready without delay.”

And in connection with the residence of Mr. Stephens, the following description of his appearance at home will not be out of place. It was written by a special correspondent of the New York *Herald*, commissioned to visit the statesman, shortly before the Presidential election of 1860.

“The first object that met our view was that of a person, apparently a slightly formed youth, walking thoughtfully through a wide passage-way that extended from one side of the dwelling to the other, and open to the air and sunshine at either end. On approaching this slight, apparently fragile personage, we discovered at once, from his deeply marked and careworn features, his broad forehead, his intelligent and eloquent black eye, it was no youth who stood before us, but Mr. Stephens himself. He now weighs ninety-two pounds, and weighed but eighty-four when he commenced law practice in Crawfordsville. . . .

“Besides his home residence in Crawfordsville, which covers about thirty acres of land, including a fine peach and apple orchard, a garden in which the pomegranates are now bursting with their luscious sweets, fig-trees overshadow the ground, and roses of

the finest varieties are in full bloom, Mr. Stephens has a plantation about two miles distant, embracing a thousand acres of land. A portion of this plantation belonged to his parents. His grand-father died and was buried on the spot; his father and mother lived and died there, and the property falling into other hands, it was not until the expiration of many years that Mr. Stephens was enabled to achieve the proudest object of his life's ambition, the redemption of his patrimonial estate. He has since added considerably to its proportions, and by improving its culture rendered it one of the finest plantations in the county.

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"During the ride through his plantation, Mr. Stephens pointed out his vineyard, comprising four acres of land. The vines are of the Catawba variety, in healthful condition, and produce, Mr. Stephens calculates, several hundred gallons of wine. He has also near his residence about an acre of land in which he has planted what he intends shall be a model vineyard, and from its fine situation, the thriftiness of the first year's growth, and other significant reasons, there is no doubt his expectations will be realized. Mr. Stephens devotes considerable of his time to his plantation, and a day or two since might have been seen sowing rye in one of his fields."

The personal appearance of Mr. Stephens always surprised those who were brought in contact with him. Perhaps the best description of him as he appeared when in the prime of his ability and at the height of his personal popularity, was given by Rev. William Henry Milburn, well-known as the "Blind Preacher,"

and who was at one time Chaplain of Congress. He says:

“ Alexander Hamilton Stephens is the most powerful orator in Congress, and that with all the odds against him. When standing he is a man of medium height, but when seated he looks like a boy, for his trunk is remarkably short, and his face exceeding youthful. Careless of his personal appearance, his hair falling in masses over his fine brow; his black, brown, or any other colored cravat (he seems not to know which) tied in a sailor's knot; his clothes fitting well, if he has been fortunate in his tailor (rarely the case); an immense gold chain, terminated by a heavy seal, falling from his watch fob, he presents an unpromising, not to say an *out ré* appearance. When in repose, his face does not promise much more; pale, with a slightly sallow tinge, sometimes with a hectic flush upon his cheek, it seems to belong to a beardless boy. His arms and legs are very long, and his whole frame, not compactly knit, appears loose and awkward, and the victim of life-long disease. How nearly disease and genius may be associated, is a question which I leave for physiologists and psychologists to settle. But I feel sure that sleepless nights and days of pain and fever have had much to do with the brilliant intellect of this remarkable man. His voice, too, in common talk, gives as little token of his power as his other features, for it is thin, high-pitched, and inclining to the falsetto. Trained as a lawyer at the Georgia bar, a wonderful school for the development of popular eloquence (for the jury system is pushed there to its remotest limits), he early displayed those gifts which have made his name so famous; a sharp incisive intellect, broad in its com-

prehension, firm in its grasp, as keen in its perceptions, coupled with an emotional nature, delicate as it is strong, giving him an invincible hold upon the interest and sympathy of his hearers. Returned to the House of Representatives when scarcely thirty years of age, he had, by the time I first saw him, already gained the undivided ear of the House. When he stood up to speak, there was no lunching, chatting or apathy in the Hall, which seemed divided between the silence and his voice. The almost feminine squeak of opening soon became a consistent ringing tone, penetrating every corner of the spacious apartment; and judging of his effect upon the ear, I can well believe what I have so often heard, that the impression of his presence upon the eye almost amounted to transformation.

“In defence of his position he is at once logical and persuasive, setting his argument before you in a clear, light and striking attitude, insomuch that the remark of Mr. Horace Greely is justified, ‘that you forget that you are listening to the most eloquent man in Washington, and only feel that he is right.’

“His manner is rapid, sometimes vehement, always collected. Having in an instant gained your absorbed attention, he wins your confidence by his apparent fairness of reasoning, until at length you submit yourself to his control without compunction, or the dread of his being overcome. The most brilliant, albeit the most satisfying part of his oratory, is seen when he turns upon his opponents. His powers of satire, ridicule, sarcasm and invective, are fearful, and yet the man of good breeding never forgets himself nor is hurried away into truculent abuse. Many a man has smarted or even withered under Mr. Stephens’ irony

or denunciation; but I question if any has ever had cause to say that he was not a gentleman.

“I fancy that there are several points of apparent resemblance between Mr. Stephens, and John Randolph of Roanoke; but there must be more of real difference. Both have been the victims of disease whose origin dates far back in life, and each has consequently been the owner of a body, which, however exquisitely it may have been strung, had been perilously sensitive. Both have exercised almost unequal sway upon the floor of Congress; and both have been noted as masters in the art of offensive parliamentary warfare. Both have been admitted to be unimpeachably honest and fearless statesmen, shunning no danger, and braving every peril in maintenance of their peculiar and cherished convictions. But Mr. Randolph had scarcely a friend. Mr. Stephens has hardly an enemy. Bodily infirmity, if it did not master Mr. Randolph’s will, soured his temper, and gave to his perfect diction the poison of wormwood, and to his spirit the gall of bitterness that verged upon misanthropy. Mr. Stephens has conquered suffering, and made himself strong and noble by entering heartily into the sweet charities of life.”

## CHAPTER IX.

MR. STEPHENS' GENEROSITY—AID TO STRUGGLING TALENT—HIS APPEARANCE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—ADDRESS BEFORE THE GEORGIA ASSEMBLY IN 1864—THE HAMPTON ROADS CONFERENCE—ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT OF MR. STEPHENS—HE IS RELEASED, AND DEVOTES HIMSELF TO AUTHORSHIP—HIS DEATH, AND THE IMPRESSIVE CEREMONIES OF HIS FUNERAL.

THERE would be no completeness to a sketch of Mr. Stephens which did not make emphatic reference to the kindness and generosity of his nature. From the time when he first began to accumulate anything like a competence, it was his custom to devote a certain part of his income, as opportunity offered, to ameliorating the condition of young men ambitious of obtaining an education and incapacitated therefrom by poverty. Yet this was not done in the form of charity, or in any way calculated to hurt the sense of a proper personal pride which might, under different circumstances, have suffered; and it is pleasant to know, from Mr. Stephens' own statement, that in thirty such cases in which he had afforded assistance, only three failed to reimburse him therefor. In his relations to the people of his own

town and his own country, the liberal kindness of Mr. Stephens was peculiarly evident.

In the Southern States, people are known by their county residence more especially than in any other way. It comes about, therefore, that there is an intimacy of association among the inhabitants of a county, and so to speak, a sentiment of clanship, which does not in the least obtain in the North. It may readily be understood, therefore, that Mr. Stephens' well-known generous hospitality and his habit of keeping open house at "Liberty Hall" brought him into especially friendly association with the people of Taliaferro County.

But it was not alone in dispensing kindly aid to those less fortunate than himself that Mr. Stephens showed the tenderness of his nature. During the war, —and while, because of the blindness existing among the authorities who controlled the destinies of the Confederate States, his wise counsel was unsought where it would have been of the most service—he passed much of his time in visiting the hospitals and in doing all that lay in his power to relieve the necessities and lessen the pains of the sick and wounded. Such gentle attributes are surely not to be counted least in summing up the character of him who could, at the same time, occupy the position of a wise and great statesman and of a kind-hearted, tender and considerate man.

Still another description of Mr. Stephens, as he appeared, while occupying his seat in the House of Representatives in Washington:

"Near the bar of the House, to the right of the main isle, facing the speaker, sits a man whose singular appearance always arrests the attention of the stranger.



You should note him well, for he is one of the marked characters of the House.

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“It is Alexander H. Stephens, of Georgia. And do you call that curious-looking creature one of the marked characters of the House? Ycs, every word of it. Truc, there is no mark of extraordinary intellectuality in his countenance; but draw him out in debate, do anything to set at work that powerful intellectual battery within, and that poor, sickly, emaciated frame, which looks as if it must sink under the slightest physical exertion, at once grows instinct with a galvanic vitality which quickens every nerve with the energy of a new life, imparts to every feature a high, intellectual expression, makes the languid eyes glow like living coals, and diffuses a glow of reviving animation over the palid countenance.

“A new spirit seems to be awakened within him which transforms the whole man into a new creature in appearance. You cease to be annoyed by that voice which pierces the ear with its shrill and discordant tones, and the awkward gestures seem awkward no longer, for they are evidently prompted by nature. No wonder that nature has slighted the outward man, since she has lavished her rarest gifts upon the inward with unsparing profusion. The intellectual power of the man seems so to transfigure the outward appearance, so to transfer its quickening and transforming spirit into the physical nature, that the emaciated figure before you looks as much like intellect incarnate, as can well be imagined.

“He hurries through the exordium, announces the subject, lays down his propositions, and advances at once to the argument, which he follows out with log-



cal exactness, weaving into the thread of it such facts as are proper for illustrations, and drawing out conclusions which the most subtle ingenuity cannot avert. Now he advances to the arguments of the other side, dissects them with admirable delicacy, exposes a fallacy here and a misstatement of facts there; here a *non sequiter*, and there a *petitio principii*; now some insidious reflection upon the South touches his sensitive feelings on that subject, and forth there issues a flame of withering invective, which, made doubly hot by his envenomed sarcasm, scathes its victim as with the blasting touch of lightning; now he is all on fire with interest in his subject, and seems to catch the inspiration of eloquence, as, with more than mortal power, he summons forth the feelings of the audience, and sways them in alternate emotions of anger, indignation, pity, love, and all the passions of the human breast.

“A death-like silence reigns over the vast Hall, broken only by the reverberating tones of the speaker’s voice. Senators have deserted the other wing of the Capitol, and, side by side with members, are sitting as under a spell, which they cannot break; Mr. Speaker has thrown down his hammer, which generally knows no rest, and has forgotten to keep an eye upon the clock that the member on the floor may not break through the ‘hour rule;’ pages have almost lost their power of perpetual motion, and are now subdued into a stillness like unto death; reporters look like ‘mediums’ with the spell upon them, inditing revelations from the spirit world; while from the overhanging galleries, graced with a brilliant array of beauty and fashion, a thousand eyes are riveted on the speaker as on a ‘charmer,’ with an air of bewildered amazement, nor dare they turn to each other for a moment, for an inter-

change of those sympathetic glances, which bring so much relief to the human heart when swayed by such emotions."

In the Spring of 1864, when it was beginning to be discerned by the Southern leaders and the Southern people that their cause was hopeless, Mr. Stephens addressed the General Assembly of the State of Georgia, reviewing those executive and Congressional errors which had in his opinion, wrecked and destroyed the Confederate government. In closing his address he used the following impressive language:

"What fate or fortune awaits you or me, in the contingencies of the times, is known to us all. We may meet again, or we may not. But as a parting remembrance, a lasting *memento*, to be engraven on your memories and your hearts, I warn you against that most insidious enemy which approaches with her syren song, 'independence first, and liberty afterward.' It is a fatal delusion. Liberty is the animating spirit, the soul of our system of government; and like the soul of man, when once lost it is lost forever. There is for it no redemption, except through blood. Never for a moment permit yourselves to look upon liberty, that constitutional liberty which you inherited as a birth-right, as subordinate to independence. The one was resorted to to secure the other. Let them ever be held and cherished as objects co-ordinate, co-existent, co-equal, co-eval, and forever inseparable. Let them stand together 'through weal and through woe,' and if such be our fate, let them and us all go down together in a common ruin. Without liberty, I would not turn upon my heel for independence. I scorn all independence which does not secure liberty! I warn you also

against another fatal delusion, commonly dressed up in the fascinating language of, 'if we are to have a master, who would not prefer to have a Southern one to a Northern one?' Use no such language. Countenance none such. Evil communications are as corrupting in politics as in morals.

"Vice is a monster of such hideous mien.  
That to be hated, needs but to be seen.  
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

"I would not turn upon my heel to choose between masters. I was not born to acknowledge a master from either the North or South. I shall never choose between candidates for that office. I shall never degrade the right of suffrage in such an election. I have no wish or desire to live after the degradation of my country, and have no intention to survive its liberties, if life be the necessary sacrifice of their maintenance, to the utmost of my ability to the bitter end. As for myself, give me liberty as secured in the constitution with all its guarantees, amongst which is the sovereignty of Georgia, or give me death. This is my motto while living, and I want no better epitaph when I am dead.

"Senators and Representatives, the honor, the rights, the dignity, the glory of Georgia, are in your hands. See to it as faithful sentinels on the watch-tower, that no harm or detriment come to any of those high and sacred trusts while committed to your charge."

For the sentiments expressed in this speech, Mr. Stephens was savagely attacked by the organs of the Richmond government. Necessarily, there were small minds in the South, as there would have been elsewhere under similar circumstances, minds incapable of recog-

nizing the grandeur of soul which had, in the early days of the conflict, impelled the Great Commoner to sound the note of warning; and which now, at the close, gave him the right to offer them such advice and counsel as to him seemed good. Calm and dignified as a Roman Senator, he did not hesitate to utter unpalatable truths, not because they were truths, and not because they were unpalatable, but because at there seemed to him to be some merit in them through which there might be saved from the wreck of his country, that liberty which he prized and for which, as he did not hesitate to declare, he would willingly have died. One Georgia journal, the *Southern Confederacy* published in Atlanta, recognized the nobility of character which dictated the wise recommendations of Mr. Stephens, and thus referred to them, conceding moreover, to the statesman the exact value of his earlier suggestions: referring to current newspaper attacks, this journal spoke as follows:

“He is a person, in the first place, of an enlightened understanding. He adds to a fine intellect by nature, the cultivation of earnest inquiry and long experience. He has been a brilliant actor in public affairs, as well as a close student in his own library. His perceptions are clear; his vision far-sighted; his disposition temperate. No man but a fool can doubt the loyalty of his nature to fixed principles, for as a citizen and a statesman he is a man of integrity. He seems to have made the science of government a system of profound research, the good of his people his chief purpose; and, since the advent of the revolution, the success of our cause the aim of his existence. Had his counsels prevailed, we would have had peace this day. There is

no sort of question of it; for they would have given us an army at the start, and a financial and diplomatic system throughout the war. The modest bearing, the earnest truths, the calm good sense, the sagacious hints, the eloquent pictures and appeals which gleam among the sturdy issues presented in his late speech, cannot fail to find the heart of all who read them; and he who rises from the perusal of that document, and has the bigotry to prate about what is called the 'Georgia Platform,' proclaims himself as unfit to enjoy a free country as he is to talk politics."

In January, 1865, the arrangement for what has passed into history as the Hampton Roads Conference, was entered into between Jefferson Davis and Francis P. Blair, Sr., resulting in the meeting on February 3rd, between President Lincoln and Secretary Seward on the part of the United States, and Messrs. Stephens, Hunter and Campbell on the part of the Confederate States. This conference was originally devised for the purpose of bringing about such an agreement between the belligerents as to effect a suspension of hostilities and some combination through which the Monroe Doctrine should be maintained as the united policy of both parties, and thus the establishment of the projected empire in Mexico by France be prevented. The conference took place on board a steamer anchored near Fortress Monroe, and which had arrived, having on board Mr. Lincoln, on the previous night, Mr. Seward having preceded him by a couple of days. The conference was informal and resulted in nothing, President Lincoln refusing to entertain any proposition whatever without the laying down of arms on the part of the South, as an act to precede all negotiations. After a

desultory conversation, and some slight arrangement being made in regard to the exchange of prisoners, the conference terminated. The Confederate commissioners returned to Richmond and reported to Mr. Davis, and on the 9th of February, Mr. Stephens returned to his home in Crawfordsville, where he remained until the 11th of May.

On that day he was arrested at his house by the Federal Major-general Upton, and conveyed under guard to Atlanta, where he was taken charge of by Colonel Pritchard, who had already in his custody Mr. Davis and those captured with him. Mr. Stephens was transferred to Fort Warren, Boston Harbor, May 25th, and remained there until released on parole October 12th. During the greater portion of the period of his incarceration, he was permitted to have the society of his brother Linton, and apart from the burden of confinement, his stay was made as comfortable and convenient as possible. Early in the following year, Mr. Stephens testified before the Reconstruction Committee of Congress, and at this time he began writing a work in two volumes, entitled "A Constitutional Review of the Late War Between the States; Its Causes, Character, Conduct and Results, presented in a series of colloquies at Liberty Hall." This work met with a large sale. In 1870, he first contemplated writing a school history of the United States, which he afterwards completed. The following year he bought an interest in the *Atlanta Sun*, and for which he wrote political editorials, while also dictating its general policy as a Democratic newspaper. He was chosen a member of the Forty-third Congress, and though prevented by ill-health from taking a very prominent part in the debates, continued to hold his seat through four

congresses, and until a short time before his election as Governor of the State of Georgia, on the retirement of Alfred H. Colquitt, at the close of 1882.

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A succinct expression of the best Northern judgment concerning the ability and career of Alexander H. Stephens, is presented, possibly, in the following quotation from an editorial in *Harper's Weekly*, which appeared immediately after his death:

“His gifts were unquestionable. Especially in earlier life his eloquence was fervent, persuasive and sympathetic, while he developed marked skill in debate. His energy was exhaustless, his knowledge of human nature varied and extensive, and his mastery of parliamentary tactics almost unequaled. At the same time, his grasp of constitutional law, his capacity for plausible reasoning, his ingenious mode of presenting his arguments, and his promptness in accepting accomplished facts, made him easily a leader of the party with which he cast in his fortunes. Had he been unhampered by the conditions, political and moral, which surrounded him, there is little room for doubt that he would have won great distinction; but it was his misfortune to be in servitude, unconscious but complete, to the terrible institution which determined the political career of every public man in the South, and which interposed a barrier that none succeeded in overthrowing or passing.”

Mr. Stephens never married. Possibly one of the elements which went to make up his life, most emphasized by its claim on the consideration and tenderness of his countrymen, is to be found in the determination never to marry, imposed on him by his frail organiza-



tion and constant illness. While there is no doubt that Mr. Stephens was one to whom marriage would have fulfilled its best ends if wisely undertaken, and while few men more needed the social atmosphere of the family, it is certain that he, early in life, discarded all hopes of ever reaching such a conclusion, and purely from a sense of his utter dependence, and with an unselfish disregard of his own feelings, certainly most honorable and most unusual.

It is a part of his early history, that when exercising the functions of a teacher, his heart was deeply touched and his mind impressed with regard for a young lady, a pupil, who was herself not disinclined to him. It is related to have been one of the most serious shocks of his life when he resisted and broke down all his impulses and wishes in this direction, and literally fled from the scene of his enchantment.

Another romance is related of him, the other party to which is still living at Atlanta, an unmarried lady, highly esteemed by all who knew her. The period was about 1840, and the lady at the time not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age. They met and became interested in each other, and nearly ten years later, the acquaintance being renewed, their attachment became more serious, their relation amounting to an engagement. Occurrences of a private nature, delays and disappointments intervened and prevented their marriage, but both continued strong in their attachment and remained single each for the other's sake. In this instance also, Mr. Stephens' ill health had much to do with the result, and in considering him in every relation, it is to be remembered that he never knew a well day in his life. He used to say that he



made it the rule of his life to live each day as if it were to be his last.

We have already presented several descriptions of Mr. Stephens' personal appearance. During his last terms in Congress he occupied a wheeled chair, in which his worn face and emaciated figure, shrouded in a great cloak, made him an object of scrutiny and remark with all who visited the legislative chamber.

Of all the portraits of him that have been made, the most satisfactory in all respects is that from the line engraving on steel by the distinguished artist, William Edgar Marshall, of which a very fine copy adorns this volume. A peculiar charm in this picture consists in the marvelous skill by which the artist has managed to include in his representation of the face one and all of the idiosyncracies and specially personal characteristics of this remarkable man. There never has been an artist who has succeeded in line engraving applied to portraiture in producing the vivid and powerful effects of Mr. Marshall. By his wonderful handling of light and shade, he succeeds in giving results of tone, color and atmosphere, which, in simple black and white, are unusual and very striking.

Alexander H. Stephens died at his home at Crawfordsville, Georgia, at midnight on March 3rd, 1883, having just entered upon his seventy-second year.

He had been on a visit to Savannah, and being exposed to sudden and violent changes of temperature, became seriously ill. His condition rapidly grew worse as he traveled homeward, and on his arrival he took to his bed, from which he never rose again. During the last week of his life, he became impressed with the serious nature of his condition, and while those about him, who had often seen him recover from apparently severer

attacks, were very hopeful, he remarked several times that he was certain he was going to die.

"I know exactly how much strength I have," he said, "and I believe I am going to die."

Again he remarked, "The time will come at last when I will not have strength to rally, and this may be the time." At about half past ten, on the Saturday night of his death, Mr. Stephens sank into a deep stupor, from which he never rallied. His remains were taken to Atlanta and laid in state in the Executive Mansion, until the 8th, when the funeral took place, amid the most imposing ceremonies and in the presence of the most eminent men of Georgia—men with whom the life of the deceased had been intimately connected, socially and politically, during one of the most impressive and important periods of the world's history. The funeral ceremonies took place in Representatives' Hall, which was elaborately draped in mourning, Governor Colquitt presiding, and Governor Boynton, Generals Gordon and Toombs, Judge Crawford, Senator Brown, Ex-Governor Bullock, General Jackson, and many other prominent personages being present. Rev. Dr. De Witt Talmage, of Brooklyn, an old friend of the deceased, was present by invitation, and offered the closing prayer.

Throughout the Southern States, and in various parts of the country, the day of the funeral was observed with appropriate ceremonies; and not the least impressive recognition of the event occurred in the Metropolitan City of New York, whose City Hall displayed the State and National colors, in honor and memory of him who had once been Vice-President of the Confederate States of America.







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Life of Alexander Stephens

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